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ABSTRACT

This document examines the first year of Jobs for the Future's Benchmark Communities Initiative (BCI), a 5-year effort to achieve the following: large-scale systemic restructuring of K-16 educational systems; involvement of significant numbers of employers in work and learning partnerships; and development of the infrastructure necessary to connect high schools, postsecondary educational institutions, and employers in a coherent system. Presented first are an overview of the BCI and its 5-year goals. Chapter 1 profiles the following BCI communities and their current/planned school-to-careers activities: Boston, Massachusetts; Jefferson County, Kentucky; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; North Clackamas, Oregon; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The following system-building challenges and strategies are examined in chapter 2: using school-to-careers to drive school restructuring; engaging sufficient numbers of employers; and building the infrastructure to connect school and work. Goals/plans for the next 4 years of the BCI are outlined in chapter 3. Appended are the following: site information about the benchmark communities; Boston compact mission/goals statement; model for Jefferson County Public Schools magnet career academy; characteristics of Milwaukee's school-to-work schools; Oregon's certificate of initial mastery for grades K-10; summary of Philadelphia's Children Achieving action plan; and benchmark communities initiative application information. (MN)

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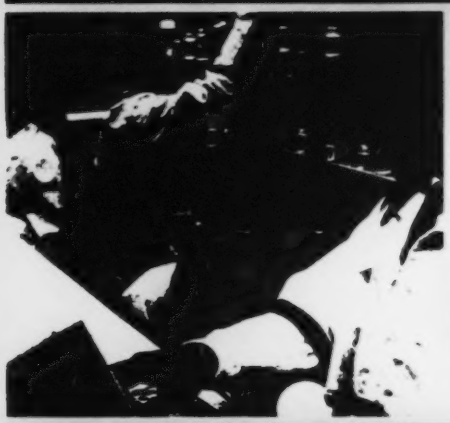
A Year of Progress in School-to-Career System Building

The Benchmark Communities Initiative



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obs for the Future (JFF) is a national not-for-profit organization that conducts research, provides technical assistance, and proposes policy innovation on the interrelated issues of work and learning. Founded in 1983, JFF's goal is to encourage policies and practices that prepare all citizens for effective transitions between learning and work. For the past five years we have worked at the local, state, and national levels to develop a new system that links employers with schools and that prepares all youth for career success.

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A Year of Progress in School-to-Career System Building

The Benchmark Communities Initiative

By Martha I. Martinez
Susan Goldberger
Anthony A. Alongi

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Lastly, there were many staff members at JFF who played a significant role in the drafting, editing, and production stages. These include: Andrew Churchill, who assisted with site interviews and initial drafts; Sarah Bennett-Astesano, who helped compile data on the sites, draft the technical assistance piece, and disseminate the drafts for review; James Wernsing and Marlene Pannell, who helped gather site information; Hilary Pennington, Richard Kazis, Marlene Seltzer, and Mary Ellen Bavaro whose critical reviews throughout this process have greatly influenced this report; Kenneth Joseph, who helped supervise the final drafting stages; and Jennifer Costa and Mary Ellen Bavaro (once again) for their herculean efforts in getting this report to production.

As always, any errors of omission or commission are solely the responsibility of the authors.

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FOREWORD

This report documents the first year of a promising initiative: Jobs for the Future's Benchmark Communities Initiative (BCI). The BCI, a five-year, foundation-funded effort, is designed to demonstrate that school-to-work or "school-to-career" systems can bring about fundamental changes in how public and private institutions work together to improve the way high school students are prepared for high-skill careers and further education.

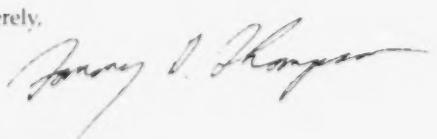
This issue has special importance to me as Governor of Wisconsin, where we have joined a number of other states in developing a strong foundation for school-to-careers in the past several years. Milwaukee, for instance, is a leading example of district-wide school-to-career system building and one of the five Benchmark Communities. In addition, I've made school-to-careers the theme of my chairmanship of the Education Commission of the States and one of my education reform themes as chairman of the National Governors' Association.

In today's global, technology-driven economy, workers are required to excel at solving problems, thinking critically, working in teams, and learning continuously on the job. School-to-careers attempts to align the nation's educational system with the modern workplace, to equip students with the skills necessary for productive careers, and to provide businesses with the skilled workers they need to be competitive. In communities where work and learning is organized around school-to-career principles, students work harder and learn more because they understand the relevance of their education and they leave school prepared for good careers and a lifetime of learning.

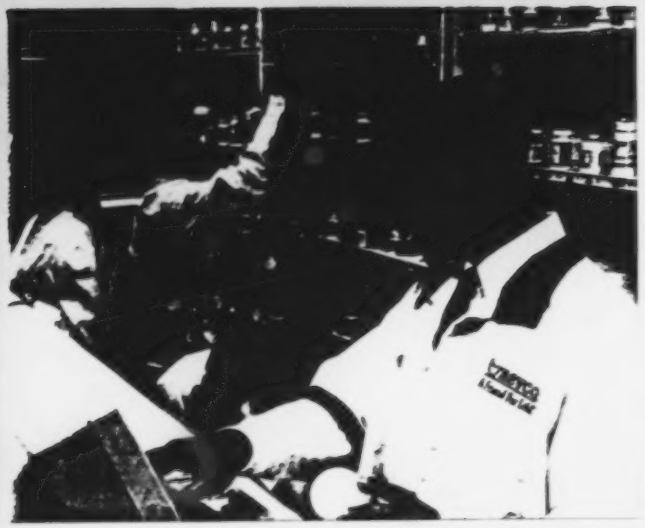
This kind of transformation of our education and labor market practices does not happen over night. School-to-careers is not another program handed down to states and communities ready-made by the federal government. As the first year of the BCI shows, for this kind of change to take root and flourish, broad coalitions of parents, employers, union members, educators, and others must come together—at the local, state, and federal levels—to knit together a seamless system. Leadership at the federal and state levels is critical, of course; but as important as "top-down" support and guidance is, the success of school-to-careers depends just as much on "bottom-up" effort and innovation at the community level.

The five Benchmark Communities are great examples of this sort of effort and innovation. The promising strategies and experiences of each community and of the initiative as a whole offer important lessons to others working to create new systems of work and learning. I am proud of Milwaukee's place in the BCI and look forward to the challenges and successes that the next four years will bring.

Sincerely,



Tommy Thompson
Governor of Wisconsin
Chairman, Education Commission of the States
Chairman, National Governors' Association



Antoine Lee is a senior in the Pharmacy Magnet at the Central High School Magnet Career Academy. He has been actively involved with the partnership Central has with REVCO Pharmacy (formerly known as SuperX). He has served as a pharmacy tech in a REVCO Pharmacy for the past three years. He was accepted into the Pharmacy Apprenticeship program in 1993 and has started at the University of Kentucky in the Pre-pharmacy Program.

INTRODUCTION

This report documents the starting point of a five-year project: Jobs for the Future's Benchmark Communities Initiative (BCI). The BCI has been created to demonstrate that a comprehensive school-to-work, or school-to-career,[1] initiative can and should be central to a community's core educational strategy, resulting in systemic change in the way we bridge the worlds of education and employment.

The BCI is a partnership with five communities that is working to produce the following results:

large-scale systemic restructuring of the K–16 educational systems;

the involvement of significant numbers of employers in work and learning partnerships; and

the infrastructure necessary to connect high schools, postsecondary educational institutions, and employers in a coherent system.

[1] The term "school-to-career," rather than "school-to-work," is gaining popularity among practitioners and policymakers. For many, "school-to-work" has negative connotations: it is seen as misleading because it implies a one-time transition to employment, and as unappealing because it is associated with entry-level work as opposed to progress into a career pathway. In this paper, we use both terms interchangeably.

The purpose of this report is to document the communities' progress and strategies, share emerging lessons, and identify current and future challenges to the expansion of school-to-careers in communities. We hope that this report will be helpful to three audiences: policymakers whose work should be informed by practice; practitioners making hard choices on the front line; and funders considering how best to make an impact in the fields of education reform and economic development.

In this introduction we provide a brief background on school-to-careers, and then discuss more fully what the BCI is, what it hopes to demonstrate, and its potential for contributing to the systemic reform and revitalization of the nation's work and learning systems.

WHAT IS SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS?

Although rapid technological advances and increasing international competition have transformed America's labor market over the past few decades, these dramatic changes have not been adequately reflected in our nation's school system. Too many American students leave high school, either before or after graduating, with poor academic skills, narrow or nonexistent work preparation or experience, and little understanding of how they fit into the adult world. About 40 percent of the nation's high school students do not go on to college—and half of those who do go on fail to earn a college degree. Even students labeled as "college-bound" report that their courses seem to have little relevance to the "real world" and that their understanding of possible careers is limited.

To help young people make more effective transitions from school to careers and to further learning, educators and employers have come together in states and communities around the nation to create stronger linkages between their two worlds. Inspired partly by European models such as youth apprenticeship and partly by American innovations such as career academies, Tech Prep, and cooperative education, these pioneers have begun to rethink and redesign the way education is delivered in this country. They have built community-based education and career preparation partnerships that can motivate students, support teachers, and develop highly skilled workers and better-prepared young adults. And with the enactment of the federal School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994, efforts by state governments and local partnerships to knit the worlds of school and work into a system of clearly defined and well-structured pathways between high school, postsecondary institutions, and careers have intensified.

School-to-careers involves three fundamental elements: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. School-based learning creates restructured educational environments which support the teaching of high-standards academic content within the context of real-world applications. Work-based learning provides students with opportunities to develop critical workplace and career-related skills through career exploration activities, internships, and highly structured and carefully managed part-time jobs that relate to classroom learning. Connecting activities help integrate the two worlds, for instance, by addressing the coordination and administration of these efforts or by ensuring that school-based learning is reinforced by work-based learning, and vice versa.

School-to-careers creates a linkage between learning and work that makes academic learning more alive and relevant to all students and offers learning experiences appropriate to a job market that increasingly demands higher-order technical, communication, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills from employees. In this way, educators, employers, and other community leaders become partners in a broad youth and economic development strategy that recognizes the major interest that an entire community has in the education and success of its young people. These partnerships are collectively referred to as "school-to-career" initiatives, but they build on a variety of approaches and models, such as career academies, Tech Prep programs, youth apprenticeships, magnet schools, and schools-within-schools.

While these different approaches to education reform and career preparation vary considerably in their philosophies and goals, the basic premise—creating better postsecondary education and employment options for all students—is the same. None of these initiatives forms a school-to-career system in themselves, however. The challenge of the BCI is to integrate these separate programs into a comprehensive education reform strategy that will reach all students within the participating school districts.

Although consensus exists around the need for an improved school-to-career transition, the movement to establish a more structured school-to-career system in this country has reached a critical juncture. Its practitioners have only begun to address the complex design and implementation questions of how best to link school and work at meaningful degrees of scale, especially in urban communities.

WHAT IS THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE?

The Benchmark Communities Initiative (BCI) is Jobs for the Future's attempt to demonstrate that school-to-career initiatives can and should be central to a district's core education reform strategy, and that they can grow to community-wide scale and become the centerpiece of a quality *system* that bridges the worlds of education and employment. Five communities were selected to participate in the BCI through an intensive request-for-proposals and visitation process: Boston, MA; Jefferson County, KY; Milwaukee, WI; North Clackamas, OR; and Philadelphia, PA. (Please refer to Chapter 1 and the map on page 14 for more information on the Benchmark Communities.) Through intensive partnerships with JFF and each other, these communities are undertaking groundbreaking work to provide the nation with important lessons and concrete strategies for designing, implementing, and sustaining school-to-career systems.

The BCI allows JFF to work with a small number of communities in a more intensive way than we have in the past, resulting, we believe, in a higher impact in the sites and the field. Through this initiative, JFF intends to help establish clear and powerful examples of high-quality school-to-career efforts that are succeeding at the task of systemic reform. These Benchmark Communities are serving as beacons to the movement, showing the burgeoning ranks of community partnerships how to move beyond isolated pockets of excellence and to reach large numbers of students at all levels of schooling. While many education reform initiatives and research efforts focus on piloting and/or evaluating specific programs or models, the BCI is providing valuable experience and information about how to build upon and coordinate successful school-to-career efforts, how to institutionalize those efforts system-wide, and how to maintain quality within and across districts.

The BCI assumes that all young people are capable of high performance, and that school-to-career approaches have the power to improve the future educational and employment prospects of all youth. In contrast to many school reform efforts that affect a relatively small number of students in a few select schools, this initiative has the potential to result in the restructuring of the K–16 educational system. In addition, whereas most school reform efforts focus exclusively on educational changes, the BCI is designed to achieve educational change *and* youth labor market reforms.

The BCI attempts to redesign educational systems and reform local labor markets in the following ways.

Educational Redesign

Traditional educational environments in high schools tend to compartmentalize academic subjects, provide lecture-style instruction about abstract concepts and theories, and shuffle students on an hourly basis through a variety of unconnected courses, taught by an ever-changing cadre of teachers. In contrast, JFF envisions the high school component within school-to-career systems to involve:

- replacement of traditional educational tracks with programs of study that prepare *all* students for higher education and high-skill employment;
- replacing separate academic and vocational tracks with programs of study organized around broad career themes and that emphasize practical education for all;
- incorporation of work-based learning as an integral part of all students' core curriculum;
- restructuring the educational environment, redesigning professional development programs, and creating authentic assessment methods and performance standards to support the implementation of interdisciplinary programs; and
- the integration of secondary and postsecondary learning.

Labor Market Reforms

Current labor market and educational practices typically place youth at a disadvantage in competing for quality jobs and training. Young people are often denied such access because they lack substantive work experience or because employers with little or no experience with young people are uncomfortable with hiring them. In order to create and sustain a system of organized labor market access for young people, JFF believes that new labor market practices and collaborative, long-term partnerships among education providers, civic leaders, and employers must be established, with the following principles:

- commitment of business, education, government, labor, and community organizations to a social compact designed to improve the educational and employment success of all youth;
- use of the school-to-career system by employers to meet their demand for a skilled workforce; and
- decisions by employers to reward successful student performance through priority hiring.

See the BCI Five-year Goals on pages 12-13 for more details about the kinds and degree of educational and labor market changes that JFF and the Benchmark Communities expect to achieve during this initiative.

WHY DO SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS AND THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE HOLD ANY MORE PROMISE THAN OTHER APPROACHES?

Utter the words "systemic change" and most teachers', students', and parents' eyes glaze over. Visions of bureaucrats shuffling chairs and re-drawing organizational charts leap to mind—hardly inspiring images. However, there are a number of reasons why school-to-careers has the power to succeed where other education reform initiatives have failed in the past.

JFF has no illusions regarding the difficulty of launching and sustaining an initiative of this scale and scope. The policy landscape of America is littered with the institutional remains of well-intentioned and carefully plotted initiatives that have not been able to seriously affect the educational or economic opportunities of large numbers of youth. The sheer number of variables and interrelationships involved with constructing solid partnerships between usually suspicious community members is sobering to any organization that undertakes work involving education *or* employment systems, not to mention both at once.

However, there are clear and compelling reasons why JFF and the Benchmark Communities themselves believe that this initiative has a realistic chance of achieving its five-year goals. They are grounded in the philosophy of the school-to-career movement, as well as in the institutional experiences of JFF and our community partners.

First, **school-to-careers and the BCI offer a very practical and appealing way to implement a number of powerful education reform ideas about how to make schools better for all students.** There is a growing consensus among educators in particular that schools would be far more effective if:

learning communities were smaller;

schools were more autonomous;

studies were more relevant and meaningful to students;

concepts and ideas were taught in the context of real-world applications;

studies were organized in a way that connected learning from different disciplines so that students could see their connections and relevance to real life;

all students were held to high academic standards;

more authentic learning environments were used in which students' actions had real consequence and clear purpose;

authentic assessment techniques (e.g., performing complex tasks) were used to determine level of mastery; and

adult mentoring was a component of students' learning experiences.

School-to-careers offers the means by which to put these effective principles of education reform into practice.

Second, **school-to-careers and the BCI capitalize on the competitive advantages of urban school systems over their suburban counterparts.** School-to-careers is an extremely promising urban reform strategy: it helps beleaguered urban school districts capitalize on the many rich, but largely untapped, advantages that cities have as learning communities. Despite the exodus of manufacturing jobs, cities remain the cultural and commercial hubs of regional economies. The concentration of business, social, and governmental institutions provides numerous opportunities to connect learning and work in an applied, contextual manner for urban youth. The BCI capitalizes on the strengths of urban environments.

Third, the initiative **builds upon the strong, indigenous school-to-career movements of the BCI communities.** Too often, the promise of external resources (foundation or federal) entices community leaders to embark upon systemic reform strategies that lack the deep understanding or commitment of community leaders. Lacking the infrastructure and political base upon which to build, communities often decide to use the funds received for different purposes than originally intended, or the reform effort never gets off the ground because of the internal debates over who should control the efforts and the funds that are associated with them.

Because of the ambitious nature of the BCI, JFF was careful in selecting communities that we believed had the capacity to create school-to-career systems and to meet the five-year goals. We realized that the success of this initiative depended upon the commitment

of influential leaders in the community who were already committed and working hard to broaden the scope and scale of school-to-careers. Moreover, these leaders needed to be from a broad base so that if one (a superintendent or a major business leader) left, the initiative would survive.

By establishing broad five-year goals for the initiative as a whole, we are providing some ambitious, concrete targets for communities *already* on this trajectory. These goals establish broad parameters, but account for the fact that the way a community chooses to design and implement its school-to-career initiatives should be shaped by local conditions and resources, political and social processes, and the creative energies of the participants. The BCI celebrates this diversity in approach; we see it as a source of strength and a sign of real ownership by each of the stakeholders in the communities.

Thus, the BCI is designed to boost existing community momentum; it does not try to create a movement where one does not already exist. JFF sees its role as a neutral convener: helping the communities move beyond inevitable turf wars; providing expertise on difficult implementation issues; pushing communities to reach a bit higher and keep their eyes on the prize; and creating a community of change agents who can share advice, provide support, and direct and sustain the school-to-career system-building process on a daily basis and over the long term.

Fourth, **the BCI and school-to-careers provide a means to mobilize the employer community to support school reform while addressing their need for a skilled workforce.** Involvement with school-to-career initiatives allows businesses to marry their civic and corporate interests. Through strategic investments of time, resources, work-based learning slots, and expertise, the employer community "rationalizes" its community-involvement and makes a direct impact on the development of their future workforce.

Further, school-to-careers provides a constructive and appealing role for many business leaders. The challenges faced by many of the nation's school districts (particularly those in large urban areas) are too great to overcome without significant help from outside of the system. The employer community often has the power and perspective to support a change process. School-to-careers provides a vehicle to bring business to the education reform and community economic development tables in an appealing way.

Finally, **the BCI and school-to-careers borrow from successful approaches in the fields of education and youth employment.** Much of what JFF can offer as an external influence in these communities must grow from what we and other organizations have learned about what works—and what doesn't—in the fields of education reform, youth policy, and community development. A lot is already known about what works. In the field of education, the power of schools-within-schools, peer learning communities, and contextual education is well documented. In youth development and employment policy, the importance of a network of adults to mentor and support teens has been shown to have a powerful positive impact on students' current and future success. Moreover, it has been shown that when young people have the opportunity to engage in productive and meaningful work, their self-confidence builds, their aspirations for further learning and higher-level careers rise, and the critical foundation for productive lives of work, learning, and citizenship becomes well established. Integrating these successful approaches into one comprehensive system is a major goal of the BCI.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This report has three chapters. Chapter I provides a snapshot of each of the Benchmark Communities. In Chapter II, we discuss the system-building challenges and strategies that each community has faced in the first year of the BCI. This chapter is divided into three sections which represent the three main areas of activity: using school-to-careers to drive education reform; engaging a sufficient number of employers; and building a strong infrastructure. Chapter III concludes with some of the challenges that lie ahead for the Benchmark Communities and all communities attempting to implement far-reaching and long-lasting education and labor market reform.

THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE FIVE-YEAR GOALS

Create a More Academically Rigorous and Relevant Approach to Education in Which Students Learn by Planning and Producing Projects, and by Working on Real-World Problems.

- Replacement of educational tracks defined by postsecondary destination (*e.g.*, college-prep versus general track) with programs of study which prepare all students to pursue higher education and high-skilled employment.

- At least 20 percent of the high school population enrolled in focused programs of study which connect learning at school and at the worksite. A community's long-term goal should be to make these programs accessible to all students.

- Incorporation of work-based learning as a core element of the high school curriculum. Within five years, all high school students should have access to at least one of the following work-based learning options:
  - a paid summer traineeship or unpaid internship during the school year connected to a student's career interests and linked to his or her programs of study in school;
  - a structured sequence of paid on-the-job training which spans at least one school year and summer and is an integral component of a focused program of study; and/or
  - employment in a school-based enterprise which is an integral component of a focused program of study.

- Adaptation of high school instructional approaches, class schedules, staff development strategies, and assessment methods to support the development of interdisciplinary programs of study which feature integration of learning at school and work.

- Development of new instructional approaches and support structures to make work and learning programs accessible to all students, particularly to those students who enter high school as discouraged and alienated learners. This includes:
  - Ninth and 10th grade programs that prepare students—both academically and socially—to participate in intellectually rigorous, focused programs of study;
  - creation of school-within-a-school structures and development of a cadre of caring adults who mentor students at school and work; and
  - connection of the school-to-work initiative to middle-school reforms.

- Establishment of postsecondary partnerships which offer students structured pathways from high school to higher education and advanced occupational training. Specifically, students should be provided:
  - the opportunity for dual enrollment in their senior year;
  - guaranteed admission to an occupational training program offered by the partners if students meet entrance standards;
  - recognition by postsecondary partners of competency-based standards developed by high school work and learning programs; and
  - the opportunity to continue preparation for high-skill careers through programs which combine apprenticeship-style worksite learning with college instruction.

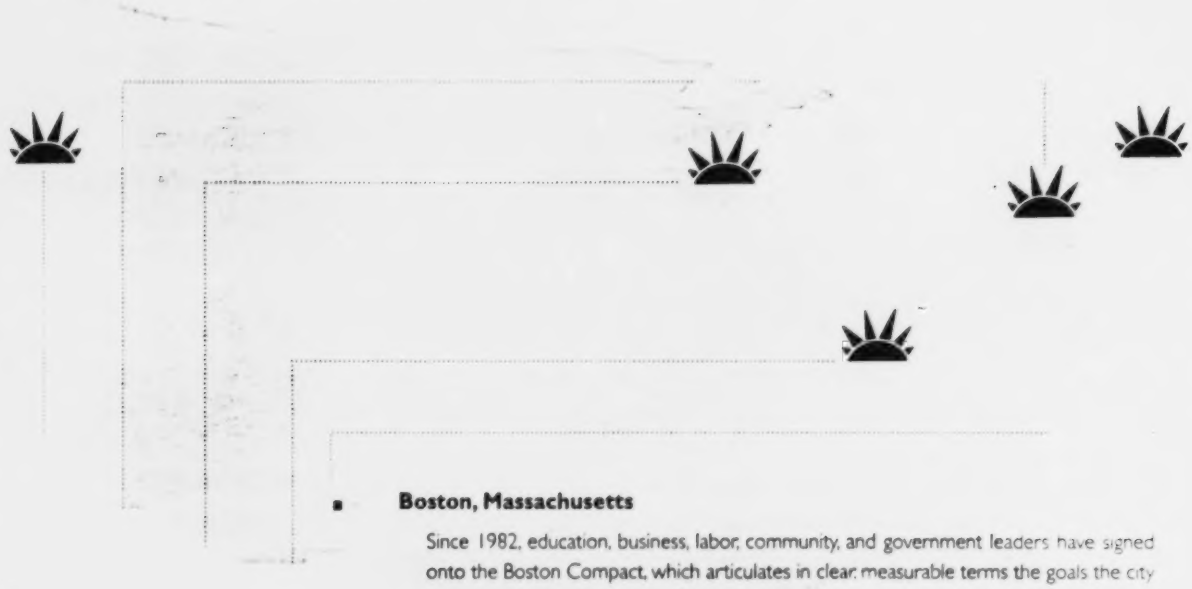
Create **New Labor Market Arrangements** Which Provide Young People with a System of Organized Access to Quality Employment.

- Establishment of a formal compact among business, education, labor, government, and community leaders to connect young people to high-quality jobs and training.
- Establishment of a new institution with a stable funding base to implement the basic goal of the new social partnership.
- Widespread involvement of the business community in sponsoring new work and learning programs for young people. Business participation rates should reach:
  - at least half of major employers (1,000 or more employees)
  - 20 to 40 percent of medium-sized employers (500 to 1,000)
  - 2 to 5 percent of small employers (under 500)
- Access for every young person in the community to a work-based learning experience.
- Creation of well-defined career paths for young people that consist of structured programs of work and learning.
- Establishment of career counseling and placement services to support the career paths established by the school-to-work partnership.

Improve Education and Employment Outcomes for Young People.

- Substantial improvement in high school completion rates and school performance of students participating in focused work and learning programs. In addition, at least 80 percent of students who complete focused programs which integrate school and worksite learning should be performing at an academic level which qualifies them for entry into the state's university or four-year college system.
- Increase (by at least 20 percent) in the percentage of students entering postsecondary programs including college and firm-sponsored occupational training programs.
- Successful completion by 80 percent or more of the 1999 graduating class of a work-based learning placement in which the employer validates students' achievement of foundation employment skills.
- Placement of all high school graduates who complete a partnership-sponsored worksite learning experience in either a postsecondary program or a job related to their career goals.
- Establishment of a system for tracking education and employment outcomes of young people in the community.

THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES



- **Boston, Massachusetts**

  Since 1982, education, business, labor, community, and government leaders have signed onto the Boston Compact, which articulates in clear, measurable terms the goals the city is committed to achieving for Boston's youth. The common thread that connects many of Boston's industries is the fact that they are knowledge based and technology driven. The share of all jobs in Boston that are professional, technical, and managerial grew from 24% in 1970 to 36% in 1989.

- **Jefferson County, Kentucky**

  Jefferson County is a metropolitan area of approximately 375 square miles. Louisville, the largest city within Jefferson County and the state of Kentucky, has been one of the economic success stories of the 1990s, consistently ranking in the top one-third of major cities in creating new jobs.

- **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

  Employment levels for the area have grown over the last seven years, adding 125,900 jobs. The employment rate in Wisconsin exceeds the national average and continues to grow, but a low overall unemployment rate masks a much higher rate for specific subgroups: In 1990, a 4.3% overall unemployment rate reflected a 3% rate for whites and a 17% rate for African-Americans.

- **North Clackamas, Oregon**

  The North Clackamas School District is located in Clackamas County, the third most populated county in Oregon. The county has a diversified and rapidly growing economy, with employment distributed across many economic sectors. Trade-related industries account for the most jobs, followed by services, manufacturing, and government.

- **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

  Philadelphia is the largest community involved in this Initiative. While the city has suffered significant job loss in some areas, most notably in manufacturing, it has experienced growth in other areas, such as health services. While student performance data generally paint a picture of poor academic achievement, recent school reform efforts are making some headway.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Jed Bowman is a sophomore student in the Central High School Magnet Career Academy Diagnostics/Clinical Lab Science Magnet. As part of Jed's curriculum, he is studying anatomy and physiology. He would like to receive advanced training and education in medical imaging and diagnostics. He has spent time shadowing this year and will get a mentor his junior year.

CHAPTER 1

THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES

Our selection of the Benchmark Communities involved a careful process of research, application review, site visitation, and internal meetings that extended over nearly six months. In addition to gauging a community's capacity to meet the five-year goals, JFF sought to identify communities that saw JFF as a partner in the creation of school-to-career systems that were built upon their unique strengths and visions of what school-to-careers in their respective communities could look like. (For more information about the application process and selection criteria, please refer to the Appendix.)

Because of JFF's interest in demonstrating that school-to-careers has the potential to serve *all* students, special consideration was given to urban sites in the selection process. JFF's primary focus on urban communities is driven by a number of considerations, including the following:

- the power of work and learning partnerships between employers and schools to improve educational quality and economic opportunity for inner-city youth;
- the way in which school-to-careers capitalizes on the competitive advantages of urban communities as resource-rich learning communities;

the existence in many urban communities of a strong set of institutional relationships between employers, schools, local governments, and community-based organizations; and

the strength and validity that urban communities bring to this initiative by providing us with lessons which are far more potent and applicable to a nation composed of significant racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity.

In July 1994, five communities, four of them urban, were selected to participate in the Benchmark Communities Initiative (BCI): Boston, MA; Jefferson County, KY; Milwaukee, WI; North Clackamas, OR; and Philadelphia, PA. Brief descriptions of each of the Benchmark Communities follow.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Boston was selected for the BCI because of its strong foundation for school-to-careers. Its advantages include:

a well-established and respected Compact between community partners to improve the education and economic opportunities for Boston's young people;

a Private Industry Council with strong strategic vision and staff capacity to serve as the "connecting tissue" between schools and employers; and

a Boston Public Schools (BPS) system with a number of good school-to-career programs that could be brought together under one vision.

The original Boston Compact, launched in 1982, called for improvements in attendance, academic performance, and school retention in return for increased opportunities in private-sector jobs and higher education. In 1988, the Compact established goals for school-based management, parental involvement, postsecondary tracking and support, academic achievement, and retention. The renewal of the Compact in 1994 focused on five new goals: access to jobs and education; a commitment to innovation; comprehensive curriculum, achievable standards and new assessment methodologies; training and professional development; and support for children and families. (Refer to the Appendix for more on the Boston Compact.)

One of the most successful school-to-career programs to evolve from the Boston Compact is ProTech, a nationally renowned initiative that offers worksite learning integrated with a strong academic curriculum across several industries. With over 375 students participating for the 1994–95 year, ProTech exemplifies the kind of

reform necessary to support and elevate students' career interests. Boston also has another high-quality school-to-career initiative, established through the National Academy Foundation, in which three high schools are organized as schools-within-schools that integrate academic and worksite learning.

In addition, the Private Industry Council (PIC) has sustained student employment activities including the Jobs Collaborative, which provides summer jobs placement for about 3,800 students and nearly 700 employers annually. Presently, the Collaborative places PIC career specialists in 14 high schools, where they conduct work-readiness sessions, supervise résumé writing, role-play interview techniques, and place students and graduates in paid work or higher education opportunities.

The Boston vision of a comprehensive school-to-career system involves expanding ProTech from pilot to full implementation within 10 identified industries, as well as restructuring schools as institutions of working and learning. At least five schools have already committed to a structure that creates smaller units organized around career and industry clusters. The Boston Public Schools' vision of these secondary schools carries each student through an increasingly intensive menu of career-related activities, from drafting career plans, to job shadowing and community-service projects, to college visits and rotations through various paid worksite placements.

JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Jefferson County, encompassing the city of Louisville, Kentucky, draws upon three major strengths for its systemic school-to-career efforts:

- state legislation through the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) that mandates sweeping changes in pre-college education;
- district leadership committed to the integration of academic and vocational education; and
- a business community heavily invested in the workforce development needs of the region.

Enacted in 1990, KERA establishes accountability standards for each school and learning goals for each student. It also mandates school-based management and an outcomes-based curriculum focused on successful transitions to higher education and high-skill careers. The Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), having undertaken extensive education reform efforts throughout the 1980s, used momentum from the Act to begin operation of magnet career academies during the 1991–92 school year. Over 7,000 students are currently pursuing integrated academic and technical studies in

the 14 JCPS magnet career academies. Each academy is structured to provide students with the breadth and depth of knowledge required for both postsecondary learning and high-skill, technical careers. In addition to the academies, the district serves another 22,000 students in career-related programs.

In 1990, the Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce formed the Kentuckiana Education and Workforce Institute (KEWI), a strong partner to the district. The Mayor of the City of Louisville and the Superintendent of the JCPS have charged the KEWI with responsibility for coordinating the school-to-career initiatives in the community. In addition, the Louisville Education and Employment Partnership—a collaboration among the JCPS, city and county governments, the Private Industry Council, the Economic Development Partnership, Metro United Way, and the Chamber of Commerce—sponsors employment programs for 1,000 at-risk students and supports career planners for each of the district's 22 high schools. These career planners provide employability skills training and career counseling to eligible students, as well as securing summer and part-time jobs for them.

Collaboration among area postsecondary institutions is also particularly strong. Organized in 1993, the Greater Louisville/Southern Indiana Postsecondary Transition Consortium crosses state lines and involves public and proprietary schools. From the beginning, consortium members agreed to pursue common goals around articulation agreements and pre-college curriculum requirements.

The school-to-career vision for Jefferson County is embedded within a broader vision of a community-wide workforce development system. (Please refer to the Appendix for more detail on the elements of Jefferson County's model.) Given a real need for a well-trained adult workforce in the area, employers, educators, and community leaders have recently begun discussing how plans for a school-to-career system fit within the broader context of a workforce development system. While the latter vision has yet to be articulated, there has been significant movement on the school-to-career piece. Five high schools—Central, Fairdale, Pleasure Ridge Park, Southern, and Western—have committed to whole-school reform according to school-to-career principles starting with the 1995–96 school year, and in subsequent years will assist middle schools and other high schools with implementation challenges and strategies. KEWI will be working closely with these schools to identify work-based learning opportunities throughout the community. In addition, the district plans to begin operating a centralized, community-sponsored School-to-Career Placement Center that will serve as a clearinghouse for information and activities for

students in assigning, monitoring, and matching students with work-based learning opportunities.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

In Milwaukee, two pillars serve as the main supports for school-to-careers:

- district leadership with a clear vision of K–12 reform according to school-to-career principles; and
- a core of business and postsecondary institutions well-versed in school-to-career concepts and ready to increase the scope of existing cutting-edge reforms.

The K–12 Teaching and Learning Goals of the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) were adopted in 1991 and use school-to-careers as their operating context. These ten key learning goals—set through a process that included over 1,000 teachers, principals, parents, business people, community activists, postsecondary school representatives, and students—center on what students should know (*e.g.*, the arts, life-coping strategies, career opportunities) and be able to do (*e.g.*, think logically and abstractly, communicate effectively).

The collaborative efforts between MPS and local institutions of higher education include new discussions (sparked by the Governor's directive) among the University of Wisconsin system, the technical college system, and the Department of Education to better integrate their planning, programs, and requirements. The UW system is currently considering some form of performance-based assessment for university admissions that will focus on students' competencies rather than college-preparatory course work.

Over 200 local businesses are already working in partnership with the Milwaukee Public Schools. Almost 900 private-sector employers hired students through Milwaukee's summer youth employment program in 1993. Through the Step-up Program, students held over 6,300 private- and public-sector jobs and large numbers of students continue in those jobs part-time during the school year. This effort is under the direction of the Private Industry Council (PIC), with specially trained Step-up career coordinators already serving in most MPS high schools.

Milwaukee's vision of school-to-careers is one that includes all students, from kindergarten through postsecondary. (Please refer to the Appendix for more detail on Milwaukee's system.) Specific goals of this vision include the following:

- All students are engaged in community- or work-based learning experiences that have an impact on student learning and connect students to the community and the world of work;

Students spend at least 25 percent of their time engaged in projects that are multidisciplinary; directly connect academic skills and work; and lead to complex learning and problem solving;

Schools have themes or focus programs around which the integrated curriculum and community-business partnerships are organized;

Students and teachers collaborate in teams or "families" over a period of time;

All students are prepared for postsecondary education.

District schools are being selected in waves to fully implement these school-to-career reforms. The 10 first-wave schools, which include three elementary, four middle, and three high schools, were selected in late 1994. The 34 second-wave schools, which include 20 elementary, eight middle, and five high schools, as well as a new alternative school, were chosen in March 1995. The remaining 110 schools will be chosen for implementation over the next three years.

NORTH CLACKAMAS, OREGON

School-to-careers in North Clackamas School District 12 has received a good deal of momentum due to at least three factors:

a statewide framework supplied by Oregon's 1991 Educational Act for the 21st Century;

district leadership committed to work-based learning as a viable learning and skill-development method; and

a business community with a solid history of partnership with the district.

The Educational Act for the 21st Century identifies foundation skills—such as thinking, communicating, quantifying, and using technology—to be achieved by the 10th grade and verified through a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). A Certificate of Advanced Mastery Program (CAM) is designed to prepare all students to pursue college, professional-technical associate's degrees, apprenticeships, and/or high-skill employment. The CAM includes six endorsement areas, or career pathways: Arts and Communication, Business and Management, Health Services, Human Resources, Industrial and Engineering Systems, and Natural Resources. (Please refer to the Appendix for more detail.)

Selected by Oregon's Department of Education as one of 12 demonstration sites for development of the CIM and the CAM, the district has an excellent reputation among its citizens and state policy leaders for offering strong academic and professional-technical programs. In addition to CIM and CAM development, one of the

district's building blocks for school-to-careers is the Sabin Skills Center, a regional professional-technical center offering advanced technical courses for students in grades 9–12. Nineteen programs offer curricula based on industry standards, and every program at the Sabin Skills Center relies on an active business advisory committee. Enrollment for 1994–95 is 2,100 students (over 50 percent of the district's ninth–12th grade population).

The community has a strong record of developing business partnerships: in 1994, the District Superintendent was chosen as Businessperson of the Year by the North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce. Local businesses provide student internships, serve on advisory committees, provide guest speakers to schools, offer mentors to students, and participate in an annual Business Summit—an event sponsored jointly by the District and the Chamber for the purposes of discussing education issues and recruiting partners for work-based learning activities.

The district was one of the first in the state to create an Office of Work-based Learning to plan, implement, and support a comprehensive school-to-career program for grades K–12. North Clackamas is committed to establishing a world-class model for work-based learning that includes a progression of activities for students from structured job shadowing to paid internships, student enterprises, and community projects. To help achieve their vision of school-to-careers at scale, North Clackamas will concentrate on developing a rigorous K–12 career development curriculum, establishing a system for work-based learning placements for the 11th and 12th grades, and continuing to develop articulation agreements with local community colleges and universities.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia's participation in the BCI is based on the following strengths:

- as the largest of the five communities, Philadelphia represents an urban area with deep challenges and resources;
- the district's recent reform agenda, "Children Achieving," which sets the standard for the type of successful innovation that school-to-careers embodies; and
- quality partnerships throughout the community—the Philadelphia High School Academies, Inc. and the North Philadelphia Compact being particularly strong examples—which serve as a solid foundation for the district's vision of K–16 school-to-career reform.

The district leadership views school-to-careers as an essential part of their overall "Children Achieving" agenda, which puts forth a well-defined set of K–16 priorities. (Please refer to the Appendix for more detail.) Two key pieces of this agenda—the further development of small learning communities (SLCs) and on-going decentralization efforts—build upon prior reform efforts begun in 1988. The SLCs currently serve all comprehensive high school students. The SLCs include the Philadelphia High School Academies system, a school-within-a-school approach to education reform dating back to 1969 that enrolls students beginning in the ninth or tenth grade and provides them with an integrated curricula and a range of career exploration opportunities, including paid work experience during school and possibly a job upon graduation.

Another building block for district reform, the North Philadelphia Compact, is a partnership focused on significantly increasing successful transitions between middle school and high school and between high school and postsecondary education and careers. Formal partners include the following: three high schools that are designated as school-to-career sites for the 1994 school year and their feeder middle schools; the Community College of Philadelphia and Temple University; and a number of community organizations and churches.

Building on current efforts to break down comprehensive high schools into SLCs, Philadelphia will create a multi-year, year-round pathway that begins in eighth or ninth grade. The pathway will be tied to youth development needs and will offer all students paid work experience. The following are characteristics of each step along the pathway:

Eighth grade: The focus will be on introducing students to education and career options through a series of exploratory activities;

Ninth grade: Students will begin to focus on the integration of academics and work experience. Community service, job shadowing, and unpaid internships will provide learning opportunities and will familiarize students with the culture of the workplace;

Tenth grade: Students will rotate through a series of worksite experiences and will spend time with adult mentors; and

Eleventh and 12th grades: Students will be formally employed for one to two days per week under the supervision of trained and caring adults.

Mentor Valerie Altenburger, child life specialist at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, explains the importance of play therapy to Mai Nguyen, an Olney High School student who wants to pursue a career as a child life therapist.

Mai is participating in Health Tech 2000, a work-based learning program sponsored by St. Christopher's and the School District of Philadelphia. The goal of the program is to provide minority students with the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in allied health professions. Each student works side by side with a mentor at the hospital for 12-18 hours a week, earning money while gaining experience.

CHAPTER II

SYSTEM-BUILDING CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

In this first year of the Benchmark Communities Initiative, much of JFF's work has involved intensive reconnaissance in each of the communities to determine what school-to-career initiatives and infrastructure were already in place, what pieces were weak or missing, what work could begin immediately, and what planning still needed to be done. While much of the process of system-building in any community is largely dependent upon local resources and conditions, there are some common issues that communities face as they begin to "scale up" school-to-careers. Based on the past year's work in the five Benchmark Communities and our previous work with school-to-career initiatives, we have identified three key tasks in the system-building process:

Using school-to-careers to drive fundamental restructuring of education: How does a community use its vision of a school-to-career system to fundamentally alter the way education is conceived of and delivered within an entire school district?

Engaging a sufficient number of employers in work and learning partnerships: How does a community secure the level of

employer involvement needed to provide large numbers of work-based learning slots and ensure that students are provided with quality experiences?

Building the infrastructure that can connect school and work into a coherent system: How does a community build and coordinate a working partnership among traditionally separate organizations such as schools, businesses, and civic institutions?

The following three sections elaborate upon the system-building tasks noted above. Within each section is a discussion of the challenges the communities have faced and the promising strategies they are using to scale up school-to-careers, as well as the emerging lessons related to system-building that have emerged during this first year of the BCI. Our intent here is not to provide a detailed accounting of the activities occurring in each community, but rather to capture those efforts and issues that demonstrate the complexity involved in school-to-career system-building.

USING SCHOOL-TO-CAREERS TO DRIVE SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

The creation of a school-to-career system requires fundamental redesign of school learning environments and traditional modes of operation. The BCI Five-year Goals highlight some key school-to-career design elements such as: replacing traditional educational tracks with programs of study that prepare *all* students for higher education and high-skill employment; using career and other thematic majors as a means to organize these programs of study and teach academic and practical skills; incorporating work-based learning as a core element of the high school curriculum; and adapting class schedules, professional development activities, and assessment methods to support the implementation of interdisciplinary programs and the integration of school-based and work-based learning.

In many school districts across the United States, so many reform efforts are underway that a clear vision of what school districts are striving for is often lost within the maze of reform activity. None of the Benchmark Communities began their involvement with this initiative with a clean slate: all were and still are involved in a variety of school reform efforts, some of which encompass aspects of the school-to-career reforms embodied in the five-year goals.

One of the biggest challenges we face is ensuring that school-to-careers is not implemented as another program, further distracting

Benchmarking and Strategic Planning

All of the Benchmark Communities have worked hard to identify ambitious but realistic indicators of success in school-to-career system building. In Boston, a School-to-Career Steering Committee is responsible for the overall direction of the school-to-career initiative, including setting the vision, developing an action plan, and monitoring its progress. JFF's President, Hilary Pennington, is a member of the Steering Committee, which comprises leaders from business, the school district, city government, higher education, and the community. Through her participation on this committee, JFF is directly involved in the oversight of Boston's school-to-career system-building efforts. Presently, the Boston Steering Committee is grappling with a range of issues, including: setting one-year goals for the school-to-career initiative; translating those goals into an action plan; and establishing realistic and relevant indicators of student and initiative progress.

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teachers and administrators from the fundamental task of improving teaching and learning. *Rather, systemic school-to-career reform implies using a vision of school-to-careers to connect and reinforce other promising educational practices.*

The major school restructuring tasks that the communities and JFF have been involved in this year can be organized into the following categories:

- building consensus around a vision of systemic reform based on school-to-career principles;
- operationalizing the vision at the school level; and
- supporting school changes at the district level.

This section describes each of these major categories of activity, the challenges they bring, and the strategies the Benchmark Communities are using to meet these challenges.

Building Consensus Around a Vision of Systemic School-to-Career Reform

School administrators, faculty, staff, and parents have seen education reform efforts come and go. There is understandable skepticism that the next effort will significantly alter the status quo. This skepticism can be overcome only if ownership for the initiative is established at the school-building level and a clear vision of school-to-careers is articulated and supported throughout the district. The importance of this effort cannot be underestimated. While "pockets" of successful programs and support for school-to-careers exist in all of the Benchmark Communities, all recognize the need to foster more widespread support for school-to-careers within the system, to better define what school-to-careers is, to communicate this message effectively and consistently, and to explain how school-to-careers relates to other large-scale educational reform initiatives.

Agreeing upon a common vision that moves beyond a programmatic approach to reform to a whole-school (or whole-district) restructuring approach, while not an easy task, is a critical one. In a study of the effects of restructuring upon the Jefferson County Public Schools, Regina Kyle found that students in schools taking a systemic and sustained approach to restructuring are more likely to show consistent improvement from year to year than students in schools with a philosophy of change that is driven by discrete projects, or schools that see no need for change at all. The schools

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We have paid particular attention in this year to helping schools become better service organizations. One way to achieve this objective is to reorganize the delivery of district-level staff development resources to support the change process. JFF has played an active role in this area, both by providing technical assistance directly to the Benchmark Communities' schools, and by developing the capacity of the districts to deliver this assistance.

In Milwaukee, JFF brought in Regina Kyle, a leading consultant on systemic education reform, to help the Director of Educational Services reorganize the way her departments provide services and support to schools. Together they came up with a range of strategies to support implementation of school-to-careers as a systemic reform rather than just another program. Many of these strategies have been put in place.

that showed the least improvement were those with a tendency to move from one short-term project to another.

Comprehensive School Restructuring

Efforts that have been underway for several years in Milwaukee and Philadelphia embody the kind of participatory process necessary to build both consensus and momentum for comprehensive school restructuring.

In 1991, **Milwaukee** adopted its K–12 Teaching and Learning Goals through a process that included over 1,000 teachers, principals, parents, business people, community members, postsecondary school representatives and students. These 10 goals center on what students should know and be able to do. The school district leadership has since embraced school-to-careers as the vehicle to translate these relatively broad reform goals into concrete educational approaches. To further define what the educational component would look like and to ensure that this effort would translate into high standards for all students, the Milwaukee Public Schools once again called upon the collective energy and intellect of school staff, community members, and business partners.

The product of their work is "Characteristics of School-to-Work in the Milwaukee Public Schools," a document which describes the characteristics of schools involved in and central office and community support for school-to-careers. (Excerpts from this document are included in the Appendix.) These characteristics help explain school-to-career objectives including the need for high expectations of all students, mixed-ability groupings of students, and the creation of integrated-studies programs. Once these general characteristics were agreed upon, each school was responsible for developing its own vision of how it would implement school-to-careers. To create such a vision, schools were provided resources to meet during the summer and school year to develop their plans.

Beginning in 1988, the School District of **Philadelphia** set out to restructure 22 comprehensive high schools through two fundamental changes: a move toward school-based management, and the full development of schools-within-schools. Under the helm of a new superintendent, the past year has been spent further defining a vision of improved education within the entire district and for all students. Entitled "Children Achieving," the planning process involved seven task forces which addressed the issues of school readiness, community services and supports, standards and assessments,

Implementation Assistance

Through presentations and workshops, JFF is able to reach large numbers of people, advance the thinking of local practitioners regarding what constitutes a quality school-to-career system, and enhance system-building efforts in the five Benchmark Communities. To date, JFF has provided the communities with presentations about general school restructuring as well as specific school-to-career issues and challenges.

In Milwaukee, for instance, JFF staff and consultants have provided extensive training to over 200 members of first- and second-wave high school and middle school teams. Topics addressed in interactive workshops in all five communities have included: creating a school-to-career vision and a strategic plan aligned with this vision; project-based learning and integrated curricula; career-pathway models of whole-school reform; strategies for involving faculty in whole-school reform; designing career pathways and integrated learning experiences; and developing quality worksite and community learning experiences. In addition, JFF's lead consultant on project-based learning, Michelle Swanson, has spent hundreds of hours working with teams from schools from all of the Benchmark Communities this year.

work and postsecondary education success, technology, facilities and space, and management and productivity. In addition, a series of neighborhood meetings were held to both inform the public about the intent and direction of the "Children Achieving" agenda and to solicit community members' input. This intensive work resulted in recommendations in each of the seven areas and an action plan based upon a five-year implementation time frame. School-to-careers is an essential part of the overall "Children Achieving" agenda, which recommends the creation of educational standards and performance-based assessments that incorporate real-world competencies as well as academic skills and knowledge, and the further development of small learning communities organized around thematic and career majors.

Operationalizing the Vision at the School Level

While there is no step-by-step manual by which to move from consensus around school-to-career principles to actual design and implementation, one thing is clear: *for school-to-careers to succeed, time must be used very differently than it is traditionally used in schools.* Not only do teachers need time to develop integrated work and learning programs, the integrated study programs they are developing require a permanent reallocation of time and work schedules. Interdisciplinary teaching and the integration of a thematic or career major that unifies a program of study requires ongoing collaboration among teachers. Infusing work-based learning into the curriculum adds another dimension to the curriculum development and instructional process. To complement learning outside the school walls, teachers and work supervisors must be familiar with and make a conscious effort to coordinate their teaching, as well as to monitor student progress in both arenas. Furthermore, the use of instructional time should be evaluated and reallocated in light of changes made to the curriculum. Longer class periods and more flexible class schedules may be required to accommodate work-based learning placements, as well to allow students to work on complex projects and problems related to the real world.

Securing the time for the restructuring effort is, however, no small feat. Time is a precious, expensive, and controversial commodity in schools. Instructional minutes are legislatively mandated and teachers' non-instructional time is often limited by contract. However, unless a school system makes school-to-careers a priority by securing additional resources, reallocating existing resources, and re-casting current responsibilities and activities in light of the system-building process, there is little chance for success.

This section offers some suggestions about how time and resources can be used at the school level in order to operationalize school-to-career principles. Based on our field work, three tasks appear to be the most pressing and logical starting places: reorganizing large, comprehensive schools into smaller learning communities; creating design teams at the school level; and using new approaches to professional development. Each of these tasks and some of the most promising strategies emerging in the Benchmark Communities are described below.

Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs)

Breaking schools down into SLCs or schools-within-schools is a major strategy in the four urban Benchmark Communities for creating new structures that better support the following key components:

- flexible and creative scheduling of classes;
- multi-disciplinary approaches to teaching;
- teachers working in teams to design programs, develop curricula, and monitor student progress.

SLCs are often defined by common programs of study and the clustering of teachers and students within comprehensive high schools. Philadelphia's plans—which not only address SLCs within schools, but attempt to create learning communities across elementary, middle, and high schools—are perhaps the most ambitious of the five communities.

Approximately 60 percent of all **Philadelphia** high school students are currently enrolled in small learning communities. A recent study by CAPD Associates shows that students clustered in this manner have better retention rates, course passing rates, and are more likely to enroll in high-level courses than their non-clustered peers. Building on these reform efforts which began in 1988, the district has recently reaffirmed its commitment to restructuring how education is delivered by continuing to break down large schools into smaller learning communities of 200-500 students and reorganize schools by feeder pattern into 22 neighborhood clusters of elementary, middle, and high schools.

School Design Teams

The closer those involved in the planning are to the locus of implementation, the better the chance the reform efforts will actually take root and flourish. For this reason, design teams at the school

level who are responsible for the development of integrated courses of study are critical. It also makes sense to connect design teams to SLCs so that their planning is shaped by the specific programs of study that they will likely play a role in administering.

This is not to say that school design teams should be comprised solely of school staff. On the contrary, representatives from business, the community, postsecondary institutions, and parents should also be active members. Because school-to-careers requires a stronger connection between schools and businesses and between secondary and postsecondary learning, the participation of individuals from outside the schools is essential to the development of strong and viable integrated learning programs.

Moreover, in order to be effective, design teams need to be empowered to make real decisions about curriculum and the structure of the learning environment. This requires a shift from traditional bureaucratic, top-down management structures to shared decision-making structures.

In one form or another, all of the Benchmark Communities are creating school design teams and increasingly adopting shared decision-making approaches in school governance. Milwaukee provides one example of the power of merging the two approaches.

> As part of a school restructuring project funded by the Danforth Foundation, five schools developed processes for decentralized decision-making. **Milwaukee** has found that those schools in which design teams were given real power over curriculum and scheduling decisions were able to move the furthest in school-to-career restructuring. As a result, Milwaukee is putting much greater emphasis on encouraging schools to adopt shared decision-making structures.

New Approaches to Professional Development

A central goal of school-to-careers is to improve teaching and learning by making it more interdisciplinary, more directly connected to students' lives and the world of work, and more focused on problem-solving and the acquisition of higher-order skills. Achieving these goals requires fundamental redesign of high school learning environments. New approaches to professional development must be crafted to provide school faculty with the skills they will need to redesign the way they work with students, each other, and their business and community partners.

This includes equipping design teams to engage in a process of continuous improvement through regular evaluation and adjustments in practice.

All of the Benchmark Communities are struggling to rethink the content and delivery of professional development in order to make professional development opportunities more purposeful and more responsive to the needs and goals identified by school staff. Some of the most successful strategies include those that model the pedagogical principles of school-to-careers (*i.e.*, learning by doing and through the creation of projects); create change agents within schools; and foster peer learning communities.

Learning by Doing: Teachers learn by doing, reading, and reflecting (just as students do); by collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and their work; and by sharing what they see. This kind of learning enables teachers to make the leap from theory to guided practice.[2] The Benchmark Communities are supporting teacher activities that reinforce this approach, including:

- teacher participation in design teams. As part of these teams, teachers in all five Benchmark Communities have the opportunity to research, discuss, and invent new ways of educating students. **Milwaukee** is spending the bulk of its professional development dollars buying additional planning and curriculum development time for design teams.
- job shadowing and internships for teachers. The worksite is a key learning site for teachers, as well as students. By visiting the worksite, teachers gain insight into the knowledge and skills required at work and a better understanding of what their students experience. In addition, they become better equipped to integrate work-based learning with traditional academic learning. Four of the Benchmark Communities (**Boston, Jefferson County, Milwaukee,** and **Philadelphia**) recognize the importance of this kind of professional development activity for teachers and sponsor teacher internships in and/or structured visitations of local businesses.

Change Agents within Schools: With change as complex as that involved in this initiative, the Benchmark Communities are finding that it makes a good deal of sense to identify leaders within the schools who can help guide and coax other school staff along the way. Two of the communities (**Milwaukee** and **Boston**) have created specific coordinator positions within the lead school-to-career schools in their respective

[2] Linda Darling-Hammond and Milbrey McLaughlin, "Policies that Support Professional Development in an Era of Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 1995.

districts to provide day-to-day leadership for the school-to-career restructuring effort. Their responsibilities include helping to create effective teams, building professional development activities into regular meetings of design teams, facilitating discussions in which teachers critically examine classroom practice, locating resources needed by teams and individual teachers, and helping to bring business and community partners to the table.

Peer Learning Communities: The psychological benefits of membership in a peer network should not be underestimated. It is easy to become discouraged at the enormity of the task of changing institutions. In addition, those who have struggled through a particular problem are often in the best position to give advice to others, and have the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their work, and thus become better able to solve problems as they arise. For these reasons, all of the Benchmark Communities are creating peer learning opportunities within schools, across schools, and between different community partners. Such opportunities include the following: summer institutes in which schools, businesses, and other community partners share information about their individual efforts and work towards further development a school-to-career system; regular meetings of school-to-career implementors across schools; leadership training institutes for principals and administrators as well as faculty; and using teachers to develop, pilot, and disseminate performance standards and methods of assessment.

Supporting School Changes at the District Level

In some districts, individual schools may succeed in restructuring the learning environment despite the bureaucracy, but achieving wide-scale educational change across an entire district cannot happen without changing the way central offices relate to schools. Our assumptions about the kind of district-level changes that are needed to support school-to-career reforms at the school level mirror the New American Schools Development Corporation's conclusions about the kind of changes that foster "supportive operating environments" for large-scale school restructuring:

Substantial school-level autonomy is a must. This includes substantial control over budgets, hiring and organizing staff, curriculum, and instructional strategies.

New systems of accountability must be designed based on clear, publicly supported standards of achievement for all students. As schools are given the freedom to design what the learning environment will look like, they must also demonstrate that they are improving the educational experience for all students.

Reliable systems of assessment must be developed that are compatible with and support the development of new instruc-

tional methods in which students learn primarily through applying knowledge to real problems.

The primary function of central offices should shift from regulation and monitoring to providing schools with resources needed to implement change.

Following are some of the ways in which the Benchmark Communities are creating supportive operating environments for their schools.

Shifting Power and Authority to Schools

All four urban communities are involved in decentralization efforts. Boston, Jefferson County, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia all operate under the aegis of school-based management, although how this plays out in each community is very different. A big part of who actually makes decisions is tied up in who controls budgets. In this regard, Milwaukee and Philadelphia appear to be moving furthest toward decentralization.

Milwaukee is in the process of moving control of budgets to the school level. Under this plan, schools would receive a budget based on a fixed rate per student, and have the latitude to spend the money as they saw fit to achieve their goals.

In **Philadelphia**, the "Children Achieving" agenda sets forth a plan to establish school councils with governing authority over school-wide policies and resources, and gives small learning communities within schools the authority to develop their own budgets, which can only be changed by the school council if the proposed use of resources will be detrimental to the school as a whole.

Developing Standards and Performance-based Assessments

In addition to changing the way teachers are trained and instruction is delivered, if the system is ever going to reflect and value the school-to-career approach, educational standards and student assessment will likewise need adaptation. School-to-careers involves the integration of academic and technical knowledge and the use of applied learning techniques. However, traditional educational standards and assessments neither value nor measure technical knowledge or whether a student can apply the knowledge he or she has learned. Moreover, in order to establish worksite learning as a core feature of a student's education, assessing students' proficiency and progress toward specified learning goals

on-the-job and integrating this learning with the learning occurring at school are essential.

Four of the five communities have begun planning and in some cases implementing alternative educational standards and assessment methods that reflect school-based and work-based competencies and more authentic measures of student mastery. The experiences of three of the communities, Milwaukee, North Clackamas, and Philadelphia, are highlighted below.

A joint effort of Alverno College and the **Milwaukee** Public Schools, the Assessing Learning Project began in 1993 with a focus on integrating performance assessment into the teaching and learning process. Initially linked to the district's K-12 Curriculum Initiative, the project is now also tied to the district's School-to-Career Initiative. Currently, performance assessments are being developed in five "core" subject areas (mathematics, science, reading/language arts, social studies, and the arts) and for five of the 10 Teaching and Learning Goals (which were described on page 19). These assessments will be targeted at three grade levels: fifth, eighth, and 12th. By involving teachers in developing and piloting the performance assessments, the project seeks to provide the district with a more rigorous and appropriate measure of student success, and to build teacher ownership of the new standards and the capacity to teach in new ways. The district views the process of developing standards and piloting assessments as one of the most effective professional development activities for teachers. The goal is to empower teachers to embed the new assessments in project-based, student-centered curricula.

In response to Oregon's School Reform Act of 1991, the **North Clackamas** School District has been involved in a county-wide school restructuring effort. A major part of this restructuring involves the development of a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and a Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). The purpose of the CIM is to verify that, by the end of the 10th grade, students have achieved specified foundation skills, including thinking, communicating, quantifying, and using technology. After the attainment of the CIM, students are to continue their studies within one of six industry clusters designed to prepare all students to pursue college, professional-technical training, and/or high-skill employment. Upon graduation, students will receive a CAM, which certifies that they have mastered advanced cognitive skills as well as a core body of specialized knowledge in their industry area.

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North Clackamas has made significant progress on CIM and CAM development since 1992, when it first began these restructuring efforts. CIM developments this year and last have been largely devoted to two areas of activity. First, leaders have established a curriculum framework that outlines specific criteria to be achieved at each grade level and content standards for grade level teachers. Second, they have provided staff development focused on the CIM and the skills that teachers will need in order to prepare students for it. Next year, each school will select one of the seven CIM outcome areas and develop an assessment program for this outcome. The following year, all schools will be expected to assess all seven CIM outcome areas. CAM development efforts have also occupied the district this year. A task force of teachers, community leaders, and community college representatives convened to identify the core skills for all students at this level and to recommend a set of student objectives related to each of the six CAM career pathways.

Central to **Philadelphia's** "Children Achieving" agenda is the assumption that all students can achieve at high levels and that the district must set high expectations for all students. To ensure that the district holds high standards for all students and provides students with the knowledge, skills, and the support necessary to achieve them, several strategies were identified by the task forces, including establishing one set of rigorous graduation standards and appropriate benchmarks for grades four and eight that incorporate academic and real world competencies.

Moving from a Regulatory Agency to a Service Organization

As schools are given more and more decision-making authority and control over their budgets, it is incumbent upon central offices to change the way in which they relate to schools. This can involve changing the nature of procurement practices and the way that professional development is conceived of and provided.

As part of their decentralization efforts, **Milwaukee** is attempting to transform its central office into a service organization for schools. Toward this end, rather than dictating the services and/or products that schools must purchase from the central office, schools will have the authority to buy services from the vendors of their choice. In this way, the central office will have to compete with other vendors for school business and, thus, be more responsive to school needs. This past year, the central office has taken some modest steps in this direction, for instance, by allowing schools to use their staff development funds as they wished.

However, even if central offices remain the primary procurement agency for schools by contract, there are other ways that they can become better service organizations. One such way would be to reorganize the delivery of district-level staff development resources to support the change process.

Founded in 1984, the **Jefferson County** Public Schools' Gheens Academy can be described as an applied research and design center and a small university. Created from a partnership between the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) and the Gheens Foundation, the Academy initially focused on providing teachers and administrators the opportunity to explore new educational approaches and to become familiar with state of the art research and practice. Eventually, the district's traditional in-service unit was merged with the Academy, making the Academy responsible for all education and training of teachers and administrators in the district, not just the professional development needed for school restructuring. With the passage of the Kentucky Education and Reform Act (KERA) in 1990, the Academy now plays an important role in helping schools meet the changes required by the legislation. These changes include the use of school-based management and the establishment of accountability standards for each school, learning goals for each student, and an outcomes-based curriculum.

The Gheens Academy has a number of features that are particularly appealing. It offers centralized coordination and provision of in-service and professional training. The programs and technical activities it provides are driven by the needs identified by school staff and are conceived of and delivered as an incremental, ongoing process. Over the years, the Academy has evolved from a small planning and development operation into a complex organization of several interrelated units. It houses the Professional Service Center—a combined curriculum resource center and professional library that provides the space and resources for teachers, students, and other community members to develop materials and units for their own classrooms. The Gheens Foundation covered over 90 percent of the Academy's annual budget in the first two years; less than 10 percent of the Academy's budget is now funded by the Foundation. This has required a major reallocation of school district funds, a clear sign of the commitment of JCPS to providing the professional development necessary for significant school restructuring.

Emerging Lessons In Using School-to-Careers to Drive School Restructuring

- ***School-to-careers is a strong lever for K–postsecondary restructuring efforts.*** The school-to-career movement has tended to focus almost exclusively on high school redesign and on

improving the transition from high school to employment and future learning. Even our five-year goals fail to give sufficient weight and vision to a school-to-career system that begins as early as kindergarten. However, many of the Benchmark Communities have recognized the power of school-to-careers at all levels of schooling and understand the need to start early, not just by exposing students to career options and issues, but by equipping students to take responsibility for own learning.

- ***Career themes are appealing to teachers and students.*** We entered the BCI apprehensive that most teachers would see career education as enhanced vocational education or one more graduation requirement, rather than as a lens that could provide focus and meaning to a student's educational experience. Fortunately, we found quite the opposite. Most teachers want to make their classes more relevant by incorporating project-based and experiential learning into their pedagogy and by working collaboratively with other teachers across traditional disciplinary boundaries. They also see the value of connecting students to business and community resources. School-to-careers is providing as powerful a context for teachers seeking to redesign the way they teach as it is for students seeking relevance in their studies.

- ***Creating a common vision is a complex and iterative process.*** While it is clear that faculty need time to discuss and research various models, in order to move from vague conceptualizations to design and implementation, they must begin to experiment with new courses, teaching methodologies, and assignments and projects for students that exemplify what they would like their school to look like. As teachers begin to work together on real projects, they have a tangible context in which to sharpen their ideas, debate their differences, operationalize their vision, and reflect upon, evaluate and modify their attempts to improve the learning process for students.

- ***A whole-school approach to school-to-careers appears to be the most viable scale-up strategy.*** Understanding that transforming large urban school systems takes several years, the BCI set as an intermediate the enrollment of at least 20 percent of a community's high school students in integrated work and learning programs. Two different approaches could be used to achieve this goal. One would be to create such programs in all the high schools in an effort to serve at least 20 percent of the students in the district in five years. These programs would then serve as models for further replication within their schools until eventually all students were served. Another approach would be to select a subset of high schools that served at least 20 percent of the district's high

school students and implement a whole-school reform strategy that would enroll all students in work and learning programs by the end of five years. In this way, entire schools that had undergone this restructuring process would then be seen as models for the remaining schools in the district.

Interestingly, all of our communities are adopting the latter approach. Two important reasons appear to explain why. First, the changes required in restructuring (e.g., class and bell schedules, common meeting time, extensive professional and curriculum development) are too difficult to arrange and support for a small subset of students and teachers. Second, there is not a great track record of success with innovative (but small) programs that operate within a traditional high school eventually spreading to the rest of the school. Instead they tend to become isolated, exceptions to the rule. In addition, these programs typically thrive on special resources that are not available to the rest of school, and are able to select the students they serve. This often causes jealousy and resentment, creating an unhealthy dynamic for the school community as a whole.

- ***Initial efforts affirm the "school-within-a-school, small is better" movement.*** While it may seem contradictory to advocate both a whole-school reform approach and a school-within-a-school approach, in reality the two strategies are playing out simultaneously in the Benchmark Communities and in complementary fashion. Large urban districts see the instructional value of breaking down their comprehensive high schools into smaller units where students and teachers feel more connected to one another. In addition, the creation of schools-within-schools, at least in the early stages of reform, allows for different levels of involvement among staff and preserves volunteerism. In this way, teachers who are ready to plunge into the reform process are not held back by those who may still need some time to become more comfortable with the changes involved in implementing school-to-careers. However, if whole school reform is to be achieved, there will come a time (in this case, within five years) when all teachers must become actively involved.

ENGAGING SUFFICIENT NUMBERS OF EMPLOYERS

In order to create and sustain a system of organized access for young people to quality jobs and training, new labor market practices and collaborative, long-term relationships among education

providers, civic leaders, and employers must be established. Current labor market and educational practices typically place youth at a disadvantage in competing for quality jobs and training. Young people are often denied such access because they lack substantive work experience or because employers with little or no experience with young people are uncomfortable hiring them. Academic achievement in high school does little to change employers' minds, since employers rarely include school performance as a criterion in their hiring decisions.

Communities must begin to address the institutional barriers to young people's access to quality employment and training. In addition, quality of the worksite placement must not be sacrificed in the effort to increase the quantity of work-based learning slots for students. Thus, two key tasks to scaling up employer involvement in school-to-careers are:

generating wide-scale employer involvement; and

ensuring quality in worksite placements.

This section explores both of these issues and the strategies the Benchmark Communities are using to address them.

Generating Wide-scale Employer Involvement

While all of the Benchmark Communities have a solid base of employer involvement in and support for school-to-careers, providing *the majority* of students with work-based learning experiences is an ambitious goal for any community to undertake. Such an effort requires a different mindset from all parties involved. All levels of education, all school-business partnerships, and all school-to-career programs must be coordinated and viewed within the context of a unified system.

There are several challenges that communities face as they attempt to recruit and coordinate large-scale employer involvement in school-to-careers. First, most communities typically rely on several different entities for orchestrating employer involvement. Private Industry Councils often serve to connect youth to summer jobs. Chambers of Commerce, with knowledge of the workforce development needs of their membership, may help employers connect with specific schools for the purpose of creating youth apprenticeship-type programs. And, in many communities, foundations coordinate corporate philanthropy to schools, and/or specific educational programs that may encompass a full range of employer involvement, from supplying mentors to advising schools on curriculum to providing paid worksite placements to students.

Using Boston as a Laboratory

Because of JFF's location in Boston, we have been able to be more actively involved in the ongoing development work of this Benchmark Community's school-to-career system-building. In this way, Boston serves as a laboratory of sorts for our work with the other four communities.

For instance, JFF is actively involved in helping Boston school-to-career leaders develop a process and some tools by which to improve work-based learning experiences for students. Given that the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) sponsors over 3,500 paid summer and afterschool placements, creating quality work-based learning experiences for students who receive these jobs will be a major accomplishment. JFF's role in this effort has involved serving on a committee that includes local employers, teachers, and PIC staff. This committee developed two documents: a draft worksite learning guide that specifies the core competencies students can learn through structured worksite experiences; and a user-friendly template that can be used by worksite supervisors, students, and PIC staff as they

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Second, communities must determine the appropriate balance between the goals and design of a school-to-career system and the ability of individual schools to initiate business partnerships. Many business-education partnerships within the five communities predate their involvement with the BCI. While individual school-business partnerships may have worked quite effectively for some schools, as more and more schools become involved in school-to-careers, this approach cannot be sustained over the long-term.

If a system of school-to-careers is to be developed, communities must rethink their institutional infrastructure, existing relationships, and current practices in order to avoid duplication of effort, coordinate communication between employers and schools, maximize business recruitment efforts, and manage employer involvement within the framework of a school-to-career system. JFF has identified specific goals in the creation of new labor market arrangements that the Benchmark Communities are using as guides for their system-building efforts. Some of these goals are outcome measures which communities should strive to achieve within five years and use as intermediate objectives in the long-term system-building process.

One such goal is that each community should, in five years, provide sufficient worksite training experiences to accommodate the majority of high school juniors and seniors. Other goals are related to process or institutional changes that JFF believes are critical to achieving the level and kind of business participation called for in a school-to-career system. For example, the five-year goals call for the establishment of a formal compact among business, education, and other community partners as well as a new institution to connect young people to quality jobs. The goals also call for employers to begin using student performance at school and the worksites as a criterion for hiring.

This section highlights some promising strategies that the Benchmark Communities are using to achieve the Goals related to generating large-scale employer involvement and developing career pathways for students.

Community Compacts

One of the surest ways to provide young people organized access to employment is to establish a formal compact between employers and education providers. The purpose of these compacts is to commit both sides to specific actions and goals that strengthen the links between education and employment. For instance, participating employers might agree to provide a specified number of work-

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develop individual training plans. PIC staff have begun training student supervisors on how to use these materials to draft training plans for their student employees.

This summer the worksite learning guide and template were piloted in approximately 70 worksite placements. The resulting training plans were collected and will be evaluated in the coming months; an exemplary subset of these will be used as models for other supervisors. JFF is sharing these materials and the results of the piloting phase with the other Benchmark Communities.

based learning slots to local students; give priority to local graduates in hiring decisions; and/or hire a specified number of graduates. Schools, likewise, might agree to specific changes in the way education is delivered (for instance, by adding workplace-readiness skills to curricula or increasing the use of technology in the schools), and/or improving specific educational outcomes (such as attendance, graduation rates, and test scores).

Compacts also foster stronger linkages between schools and employers because of the commitments each has made to the other. If employers agree to employ high school students, it is in their interests to play a more active role in the education of those students: whether that means advising schools on curriculum development, providing work-based learning experiences for students, or giving feedback to schools about the preparedness of their students. These stronger linkages also prompt schools to begin examining exactly what they want their students to know and be able to do, and to change the way they certify this learning, rather than simply awarding a diploma primarily on the basis of seat time.

No where has this strategy been more successful than in **Boston**. The Boston Compact, which was highlighted in Boston's profile on page 16, has been a powerful means to secure the commitment of the city's major employers to the Boston Public Schools and to school-to-careers. Established in 1982, the Compact has been updated and reaffirmed twice since its inception, indicating its continuing strength and vitality and the community's long-term investment in the schools. The original Compact called for employers and postsecondary institutions to provide increased opportunities in private-sector jobs and higher education in return for improvements in student attendance, retention, and academic performance. Employers have since strengthened their commitment by not only guaranteeing jobs to Boston Public Schools graduates, but improving the quality of jobs provided to students.

Following Boston's lead in this area is **Philadelphia**. The Task Force on Work and Postsecondary Education Success, recently recommended that the school district and the city's major employer organizations, higher education institutions, and unions form a Partnership Agreement to increase access to job opportunities and postsecondary education for Philadelphia students. This task force was one of several that recently provided their recommendations to the Philadelphia's "Children Achieving" agenda (described on page 21 and summarized in the Appendix).

Intermediary Organizations

School-to-career programs across the country can testify to the difficulty of recruiting employers. Employer outreach and cultivation is labor-intensive, and the task is magnified exponentially when the goal moves beyond securing sufficient work-based learning slots for a specific program to creating a systemic community-wide approach to school-to-careers. Few schools, districts, or employers are willing or able to single-handedly undertake the level of employer recruitment and coordination necessary in school-to-career system-building. In addition, school personnel who have little or no experience in the private sector often lack credibility with the business community, and may have a cloudy understanding of business culture and priorities, and thus, have difficulty engaging and sustaining employer partners.

JFF's experience with school-to-career programs and with the Benchmark Communities points to the strength of using third-party intermediaries with strong roots in the business community to fulfill this role. The most effective intermediaries have credibility with business and industry, a history of working with employers, and the staff and financial resources (or the capacity to generate these resources) necessary for this function. In two of the Benchmark Communities (Boston and Jefferson County), organizations that are well-suited for this role already exist.

There are several reasons why the **Boston** Private Industry Council (PIC) is the right organization to generate and coordinate employer involvement in Boston's school-to-career system-building efforts. The PIC is already involved in education partnerships—it oversees after-school and summer youth employment programs; and its board serves as a Regional Employment Board, making it responsible for overseeing school-to-careers and workforce development throughout in the city. In addition, with substantial participation of major employers and their CEOs, the PIC has the employer connections necessary to produce the labor market commitments fundamental to supporting a community-wide school-to-career system. Thus, in theory and in practice, the PIC is positioned to influence labor market relationships and related public resources in support of the BCI Five-year Goals.

In 1990, the **Louisville** Area Chamber of Commerce formed the Kentuckiana Education and Workforce Institute (KEWI) to promote the development and delivery of an educated, quality workforce in Kentuckiana.[3]

[3] Kentuckiana refers to the Greater Louisville area, which encompasses Jefferson County, Kentucky, and parts of Southern Indiana.

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that is able to compete in a global marketplace. KEWI's constituency includes representatives from business and industry, labor, government, education, and community organizations and its work falls into three areas: collecting and analyzing information on the local labor market; developing collaborative initiatives among various community partners (including business, government, education, labor and community-based organizations) to further the education and employment training skills of youth and adults; and assisting regional employers in becoming high performance workplaces. Because of their mission, their broad constituency, and their leadership in the area of workforce development, in 1992, the Mayor of the City of Louisville and the Superintendent of the JCPS charged the KEWI with the responsibility and the challenge of coordinating all school-to-career initiatives in the community.

Industry Clusters as an Organizing Strategy

JFF has encouraged the communities to organize employers into industry clusters that represent the major sectors of the local economy and to coordinate ongoing recruitment efforts at the district-level. This is not to say that school-level efforts to secure business partners have no place within the system, but rather that these efforts should be channeled and coordinated in a systemic rather than piecemeal fashion. The benefits to such an approach are many: recruitment efforts can be targeted at the industries with the greatest labor market presence; the involvement of current business partners can be maximized by having them implement peer recruitment strategies and generally facilitate employer involvement within their clusters; and school-to-careers can be linked to broader economic and workforce development issues and systems.

To increase and better coordinate business recruitment and involvement in school-to-careers, **Boston** has begun to organize its businesses and school-to-career programs into industry clusters. Ten groupings of employers that are presently involved in ProTech and other school-to-career programs (e.g., health care and finance), as well as industry clusters that represent the largest employers in the area (e.g., education and retail) have been identified. Massachusetts is also in the process of identifying industry clusters to serve as a state framework for local school-to-career efforts. The ten industry clusters that the state is likely to adopt include: health and biotechnology; building and architecture; communications; transportation; travel and leisure; education, government, and social services; commerce and finance; manufacturing; utilities and environmental services; agriculture and marine industries. Boston's industry clusters will fall loosely within this framework.

The industry clusters will serve not only as an organizational framework for existing school-to-career efforts, but also as a way in which Boston can

systematically go about recruiting businesses and coordinating their involvement. Initial responsibilities for each industry cluster include developing a range of work-based learning experiences (from job shadowing to apprenticeships) and supplying schools with business partners to jointly develop career pathway curricula. Moreover each industry cluster will be chaired by a business leader, who, with staff assistance from the PIC, will help guide the cluster's recruitment strategy and support the members involved in school-to-careers.

Using Information Systems to Coordinate Employer Involvement

A key issue in moving to scale is developing a system to coordinate the process of recruiting business partners for the many schools seeking to provide their students with work-based learning opportunities. A frequent complaint lodged by employers that are recruited to partner with schools is that they are approached by many different school personnel at many different times throughout the year. School and community leaders must organize when and how often employers should be approached, as well as who will serve as the point person on the school side who will coordinate the recruitment activity. North Clackamas stands out as one community that has established a business recruitment and student placement process that is centrally coordinated, yet responsive to student and staff needs through the effective use of staff and technological resources.

As a first step in scaling up the work-based learning component for students, **North Clackamas** hopes to provide a significant number of this year's and all of next year's ninth-grade class with job-shadowing opportunities. In conjunction with the Clackamas County School-to-Work Coalition, the North Clackamas School District has begun an aggressive business recruitment effort. Three staff members—one from North Clackamas School District, one from the Employment Department office and the third from the county's Employment, Training, and Business Services—are primarily responsible for recruiting businesses for the county's schools; staff at the individual schools are responsible for placing students. The three recruiters avoid stepping on each other's toes by periodically reviewing and updating a master list of employers in the county and dividing the list among the three of them.

While this is an important step in coordinating this process, the most impressive coordination and organization is exhibited at a later stage—when schools begin placing students. Thanks to computer technology and training provided by the Employment Department, school staff and the

county's business recruiters have access to a networked database. This allows recruiters to input the names of businesses they have approached and any relevant information about job shadowing opportunities (e.g. the types of jobs to which students may be exposed, how many students each business will accommodate in a given time period, and appropriate dress). School staff, who are responsible for preparing students for job shadows as well as placing them, have access to this information from their individual schools. Once they make the necessary arrangements for a job shadow with a given business, school staff then put this information into the database which tracks students placed with each business and helps school staff coordinate their placement efforts.

School Performance as a Criterion for Hiring

Unless employers seriously consider school performance in their hiring decisions, students who see little relevance between school and work and few rewards for doing well in school will continue to put in a minimum amount of effort and time or drop out of school altogether. When employers begin using school performance as a criterion in hiring decisions, students get a strong a message about the value and relevance of education, and employers become more vested in the education provided students. This in turn leads to increased employer interest in and involvement with curriculum design and stronger partnerships between employers and schools.

To demonstrate the district's confidence in its educational system and its commitment to its students, as well as to encourage local employers to value school performance in their hiring decisions, the **Jefferson County** Public Schools is developing a Graduate Guarantee Initiative. This Graduate Guarantee would be provided for JCPS graduates who have achieved a high school diploma, an Integrated Academic Portfolio, and a Certificate of Initial Mastery. (The Integrated Academic Portfolio is an accumulation of work demonstrating the six Kentucky Education Reform Act goals and academic expectations. The Certificate of Initial Mastery is to be awarded to students based on a rigorous education program and represents a student's cumulative accomplishments over several years.) Employers who hired students with these credentials would be guaranteed that the students met the knowledge and competencies certified by the district. If employers were not satisfied that a given student had the certified skills and knowledge, the district would retrain the graduate at no expense to the employer or to the graduate.

Ensuring Quality in Worksite Placements

Scaling up school-to-careers requires the involvement of large numbers of employers in the community. This pressure to generate sufficient employer partners can have a detrimental effect on the quality of worksite placements provided to students unless care is taken to ensure that students will be receiving a worthwhile experience. In order for work-based learning to play a central role in a student's education, the experiences must complement what students are learning in school, and there must be ways to assess what students have learned at work. In the communities we have selected, employer interest in participating in school-to-career programs is strong. A central task over the next few years is to transform employer enthusiasm for school-to-careers into meaningful work-based learning placements for students.

The BCI Five-year Goals address the issue of quality work-based learning by specifying that training experiences be well-supervised and linked to what students learn in school, and that employers validate students' achievement of foundation employment skills. While the goals are not very prescriptive about what constitutes a quality work-based learning experience, from its work in the field, JFF has distilled 10 design elements (see Sidebar) that are critical to quality work-based learning. These elements include a well-structured training plan that focuses on the development of broad, transferable skills. This year JFF has begun working with Boston both to help them create a workable template for training plans and a strategy to encourage their widespread use.

The **Boston** Private Industry Council (PIC) facilitates over 3,500 paid summer and afterschool placements and has begun to concentrate its efforts on creating quality work-based learning experiences for students who receive these jobs. A committee that includes local employers, teachers, PIC staff, and JFF staff have developed a draft worksite learning guide that specifies the core competencies that students can learn through structured worksite experiences. As a companion piece to this learning guide, the committee also drafted a user-friendly template that can be used by worksite supervisors, students, and PIC staff as they develop individual training plans. PIC staff have begun training student supervisors on how to use these materials to draft training plans for their student employees. JFF intends to share these exemplary training plans and the lessons learned from developing and implementing them with the other Benchmark Communities in the near future.

TEN ELEMENTS OF QUALITY WORKSITE LEARNING [4]

1. **Partners formally agree on the goals of the work-based learning program and how to achieve them.**
2. **Student learning at the workplace progresses according to a structured plan.**
3. **Work-based learning experiences promote the development of broad, transferable skills.**
4. **School-based activities help students distill and deepen lessons of work experience.**
5. **Student learning at the worksite is documented and assessed.**
6. **The program prepares students to enter the workplace.**
7. **Students receive ongoing support and counseling.**
8. **The program provides orientation, training, and ongoing support to worksite and school staff.**
9. **Administrative structures are established to coordinate and manage the worksite component.**
10. **Mechanisms exist to assure the quality of students' work-based learning experiences.**

[4] Susan Goldberger, Richard Kazis, and Mary Kathleen O'Flanagan. January 1994. *Learning Through Work: Designing and Implementing Quality Worksite Learning for High School Students.* New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

Emerging Lessons in Engaging Sufficient Numbers of Employers

- ***The power of formal compacts cannot be overestimated.*** Although sweeping state education reform laws have played a major role in at least three of the five Benchmark Communities, formal compacts between local community partners seem to be an even more powerful lever for change. Over the course of the year, it has become clear that Boston has benefited from long-term investment and commitment from business, education, and government leaders who have formally agreed on three separate occasions over the course of 13 years to the Boston Compact. While the other communities have made substantial progress in their school-to-career system-building efforts, Boston seems to enjoy the greatest breadth of leadership and has moved the furthest in identifying implementation milestones to measure the progress of its system-building efforts. School-to-career system building in Boston is led mainly by key individuals from major corporations, city government, the school system, and other community leaders who have been associated with the work of the Compact for many years. In addition, the Compact's emphasis on measurable outcomes has influenced the school-to-career system-building efforts as well. The School District of Philadelphia has also recognized the power of formal agreements between community partners and is working towards its own compact with local employers. At least two other Benchmark Communities are moving in this direction.

- ***Responsibility for employer recruitment must be carefully coordinated.*** Prior to their involvement in the BCI, all five communities fostered partnerships between individual schools and businesses. While this type of approach to education/business partnerships may have worked quite effectively with a limited number of schools, as more and more schools become involved in school-to-careers, employers have begun to express frustration and confusion over the unconnected and multiple requests they receive from schools.

  As an alternative to school-driven employer recruitment approaches, the use of a single agency with responsibility for coordinating employer recruitment activity throughout the community may be the best way to maximize recruitment efforts and reduce confusion and frustration. This is not to say that school-level efforts to secure business partners have no place within the system, but rather that these efforts should

occur within a system-building framework that is agreed upon by the various parties and overseen by a central agency.

- ***Recruiting employers through industry clusters is beneficial to partnerships.*** Using industry or business clusters to organize system-wide employer recruitment is an effective and efficient method. Through these clusters, recruitment efforts can be targeted at the industries with the greatest labor market presence and/or potential for growth, and career pathways can be developed in the form of entry-level jobs for graduates and/or student support for further education and training. Moreover, recruitment efforts can be enhanced by using business partners to recruit other employers in their industry.

  Industry clusters also foster the development of a collective industry voice. Whereas some trade associations may serve this purpose, trade associations do not cover the full range of employers in a community. Likewise, employer organizations such as chambers of commerce that represent a diversity of employers, tend to speak for businesses in general, rather than the specific needs and interests of specific subsectors. On the other hand, the use of industry clusters in school-to-career system building creates a forum for industry-based information sharing and linking with community-wide economic and workforce development systems.

BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO CONNECT SCHOOL AND WORK

Developing the infrastructure that can link the worlds of education and employment on a system-wide basis remains a challenge to all Benchmark Communities. At a minimum, building this infrastructure means:

- establishing a governance body that can effectively champion and direct system-building efforts; and
- creating a means of managing and coordinating partnership activities so that the partnership becomes institutionalized.

This section describes what is needed in school-to-career governance structures as initiatives expand within their communities. In addition, this section addresses some salient issues related to managing and coordinating partnership activities.

Governing the Partnership

Our work in the five communities during this past year has demonstrated that a governance structure is vital to the system-

building process. In each community, it is essential to create a leadership body that can champion the cause of school-to-work. Such a champion is needed to develop understanding and support among educators, employers, and the public and to keep communities focused on imagining and creating an entirely new system. It is this governing body that should set goals and benchmarks to set school-to-work on its proper course and ensure its accountability to the community.

School-to-career efforts involve, at a minimum, a partnership of schools and employers. When creating large-scale school-to-work systems, the involvement of other parties—including government agencies, community organizations, labor unions, and parents—become even more important for success. With so many parties involved in the complex task of creating a school-to-career system for the entire community, there is a clear need for a governing body that represents the various interests and fulfills essential functions, such as: setting policy; designing and reviewing program implementation; and monitoring program performance.

Membership in this body should typically include the superintendent of the school district, presidents of local community colleges and universities, CEOs of the large and influential companies in the region, the city's mayor and/or the county superintendent, and presidents of key community, labor, parent, and business organizations.

In all of the Benchmark Communities, high-level advisory groups for systemic educational reform efforts already exist. Whether existing groups in the Benchmark Communities assumed this role or new governing bodies have been created, JFF's work with all five communities has focused on ensuring that the group:

- represents all the parties that should be involved in school-to-career system-building;
- sees itself as the entity responsible for directing and monitoring the system-building process;
- sets goals, measures progress, and holds stakeholders accountable; and
- has sufficient authority to fulfill this role.

One key challenge facing all of the communities as they attempt to establish a leadership body is uneven commitment among the various partners. In three of the communities (Milwaukee, Philadelphia, and North Clackamas), the school system is leading school-to-career scale-up efforts; in the other two (Boston and

Peer Learning

There are no easy answers to many of the implementation issues involved in creating a school-to-career system. Those who have struggled through a particular problem are often in the best position to give advice to others. And, by acting as consultants to other efforts, partners sharpen their abilities to be reflective and analytic about their work, and thus become better able to solve problems in their own communities as they arise.

The peer-learning assistance that JFF provides comes in many forms and from many sources. One of the most powerful kinds of assistance JFF provides is connecting the sites to one another. We do this in several ways, including electronically. Leaders in each of the Benchmark Communities are members of JFF's OnLine STC Network. This gives them ongoing access to JFF, one another, the complete STC Network membership list, as well as information on funding, legislation, and recent best-practice examples.

In addition to providing electronic access to the sites, JFF has sponsored two intersite conferences that build on the strengths each of the communities brings

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Jefferson County) employer intermediaries have served as catalysts for these efforts, with the school system becoming an increasingly active partner. Establishing an equal partnership is a delicate process, but one that is necessary to ensure the level of commitment that it takes to create a comprehensive school-to-career system. As communities solidify this partnership, great care must be taken to ensure not just that the governing body represents the collective community leadership, but that all parties recognize their role and stake in the creation of the school-to-career system. Then and only then can organizational accountability for school-to-career scale-up be achieved.

A second challenge in this area is that of balancing the need to establish clear goals with the need for an inclusionary process. Partnerships only work when member organizations are held accountable for outcomes. Otherwise they become empty exercises—members show up for obligatory meetings, but nothing tangible results. For this reason, JFF has structured its partnership with the five Benchmark Communities around a set of measurable five-year goals.

While agreed upon outcomes and implementation milestones are critical to complicated initiatives such this one, the process of developing them is equally important. For all parties to be committed to and accountable for system building, they must be part of the initial decisions around how the system should be designed and its implementation evaluated. JFF and the community governance bodies have taken great pains to include school leadership teams, employers, and other front-line participants in refining the five-year goals, and establishing measures of progress.

One of the most promising governance structures that has evolved to date is **Boston's** School-to-Career Steering Committee. Built upon a solid foundation of commitment under the Boston Compact, the School-to-Career Steering Committee comprises leaders from business, the school district, city government, higher education, and the community. Jobs for the Future also has a presence on this committee; JFF's President, Hilary Pennington, serves as a member.

The Steering Committee is responsible for the overall direction of the school-to-career initiative in Boston, which includes setting the vision, developing an action plan and monitoring the plan's progress. Much of the committee's work is accomplished through a subcommittee structure that

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to the Initiative and capitalize on the momentum of the collective. In January 1995, JFF held the first intersite conference for the Benchmark Communities in Philadelphia. A second mini-BCI conference was held in Boston this summer, the day before JFF's annual National Leadership Forum on School-to-Work Transition. At each conference, the communities used the time to get to know one another; visit local school-to-career program sites; share reports of initial progress and setbacks; reflect upon where they had been; and strategize about where they wanted to go.

The intersite conferences are held in the Benchmark Communities themselves so that participants have the chance to actually see and learn from each community's school-to-career activities and to foster relationships among local practitioners. Similarly, JFF has arranged for leaders from a number of Benchmark Communities to visit other Benchmark and non-Benchmark sites to expand their knowledge about the variety of models being implemented and how implementation issues are being resolved in different settings.

gives school and business partners at the operational level a chance to influence the system's vision and goals directly.

During the first year, the Steering Committee focused on:

- translating the BCI Five-year Goals into a set of measurable outcomes that the partners could hold each other accountable for achieving;
- defining the roles and responsibilities of the partners for implementing these outcomes; and
- establishing realistic and relevant performance indicators to monitor progress of the initiative.

While not as far along as Boston in solidifying its partnership and identifying an appropriate governing body, **Jefferson County's** recent efforts in this area deserve mention, particularly for the role that government is playing in system building. More so than in any other Benchmark Community, city and county government leaders in Jefferson County have become increasingly critical players in school-to-career scale-up efforts. Given a real need for a well-trained adult workforce in the area, employers, educators and community leaders have recently begun discussing how plans for a school-to-career system fit within the broader context of workforce development. City and county officials are not only involved in initial discussions around a comprehensive workforce-development system, they are serving as key players, along with top business and education leaders, in convening the various parties and driving the system-building process.

Managing and Coordinating Partnership Activities

A second task in building the infrastructure relates to institutionalizing the partnership. The BCI Five-year Goals call for the communities to establish a new institution with a stable funding base to implement the basic goals of this new social partnership. JFF has learned from its previous work with school-to-career initiatives that without some type of intermediary organization to serve as broker between schools and employers and to coordinate activities that are beyond the scope of either individual party, a school-to-career partnership cannot be sustained.

Establishing this coordinating institution as a neutral body is challenging. It may take a struggle between the various parties to establish equality of ownership. Even if founded on such a basis of equality, an intermediary organization may, over time, lose its credibility as a non-biased coordinating entity; it may come to be

Dissemination of Best Practice

While site visits are a powerful technical assistance strategy, they have their limitations. First, it not financially feasible to visit each and every "best practice" program or initiative identified. Second, only small numbers of people can typically be accommodated on site visits. Third, site visits often don't provide the depth or the kind of information that is sought by practitioners. For instance, examples of integrated curricula are difficult to fully observe or appreciate in a one- or two-day visit to an entire program.

Thus, to complement the observation of best-practice sites, JFF has placed a high priority on the dissemination of information to all the Benchmark Communities that highlights leading-edge school-to-career design and implementation across the United States. In the first year, much of this dissemination effort has focused on examples of integrated curricula. All of the Benchmark Communities have expressed a need for concrete examples of applied academics and ways to integrate different career themes into core academic

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viewed as primarily serving the interests of either the school system, business, or itself. Thus, while there clearly is a need for some type of recognized and agreed-upon structure to manage and coordinate the partnership, it has become less clear that a single intermediary agency is the best approach. In fact, a dual management structure now appears to be the most feasible approach.

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Although management of the overall initiative in each of the Benchmark Communities is shared among the various partners, at least four of the communities are moving toward a dual management structure that provides one institutional home for school-related partnership activities and a separate one for those activities that relate to business participation.

On the school side, all five Benchmark Communities have identified district-level coordinators whose primary responsibility is the day-to-day management of scaling up school-to-careers. These coordinators either report directly to the superintendent or to an assistant superintendent.

On the business side, four of the Benchmark Communities have identified intermediary organizations which are primarily responsible for organizing business participation. Two of these communities are using what are common intermediaries in school-to-career partnerships: **Boston** is using its Private Industry Council and **Jefferson County** is using the Kentuckiana Education and Workforce Institute, which is affiliated with the local chamber of commerce.

On the other hand, **Philadelphia** and **Milwaukee** are creating new intermediaries to organize business participation. Milwaukee is in the process of setting up a new office to coordinate the efforts of several existing community and business organizations that share responsibility for linking schools and businesses. In Philadelphia, an Oversight Board—composed of leaders of business and industry, labor organizations, civic organizations, and youth development and workforce development organizations—will have the responsibility of developing the intermediary.

programs. Because of JFF's presence in the field, we are able to identify and access curricula that the individual Benchmark Communities would find challenging to locate. As a service to the communities, we have begun compiling examples of curricula, disseminating them to teachers and school district personnel in the five sites, and hope to establish a catalogued library which all of the communities can access electronically.

Emerging Lessons in Building the School-to-Career Infrastructure

- ***The importance of an overarching governing body cannot be overstated.*** Our work this year in the communities convinced us of the need for a governing body to oversee and direct the system-building process. Without it, communities must rely on

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one party (usually the school system or a business intermediary) to drive the system-building efforts. This often results in lop-sided commitment and progress in scaling up school-to-careers. A governing body that represents all vested interests and has significant clout in a community solidifies the various parties' commitment to the initiative, ensures that progress will be systematically monitored and assessed, and establishes accountability for the entire process.

2. ***An inclusionary process for setting goals and performance indicators helps build consensus and momentum.*** While tangible goals and implementation milestones are critical in complicated initiatives such as this one, the process of developing them is equally important. The strength of the partnership lies in its ability to collectively define what it is trying to accomplish, how it is going to get there, and what specific role each party plays in this process. Differences in organizational culture and language can actually be very helpful in this regard, since these force all partners to clarify the purpose of the partnership and the concrete commitments each is making. In addition to building consensus among the parties, establishing clear intermediate performance milestones through an inclusionary process helps build momentum by motivating partners to follow through on their commitments, and allows celebration of short-term accomplishments.

2. ***Finding an appropriate single home for school-to-career partnerships in a community is unlikely in the short-run.*** Institutionalizing the partnership may eventually require the creation of a new institution to coordinate and manage partnership activities that are beyond the scope of any one party. However, in the meantime, a joint management structure in which managers from both the education and employer communities work together to coordinate activities is preferable to identifying an intermediary that lacks the capacity to perform this function. Perhaps as a partnership matures, a new hybrid institution that represents a true blending of interests will be created.

Quan Founder is the manager of a $500,000 KFC Mobile Restaurant—the only one like it in the world. He has a staff of 85 students who are in the Business Management/Entrepreneurship Program at Central High School. The restaurant operated at a $8,725.88 profit last year. The profit is being used for scholarships for the seniors participating in the project. Ninety-eight percent of its students are continuing their education beyond high school. Quan has won a full scholarship to Berea College where he will major in Business Administration.

CHAPTER III

THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

As we reflect upon the progress of the past year, it is important to note that the Benchmark Communities themselves deserve significant credit for wading through some very difficult issues, overseeing the day-to-day planning and implementation, rallying their troops, and making significant headway in the system-building process. Not all of this work has been detailed in this report; but we do hope that the depth and breadth of their current efforts and future plans are captured here.

Despite the significant progress that has been made in this first year, there is still much work that lies ahead in the creation of school-to-career systems. The issues that have dominated this first year—building consensus around a common vision, crafting and implementing staff development plans to reach that vision, scaling up employer involvement, and identifying appropriate governance structures for the system-building process—will continue to be addressed. In addition, other issues are becoming more pressing and will likely require a good deal of attention from JFF and the communities themselves. A synopsis of some of the most chal-

lenging aspects of our work to date, as well as the implications for future work on the BCI follows.

MANAGING THE CHANGE PROCESS IN A DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT

Managing a change process as complicated and comprehensive as one envisioned by this initiative requires a significant investment of staff time and energy. One of the most challenging aspects of this ambitious initiative is recognizing the limitations within which we work (*e.g.*, there are rarely enough resources—people, money, or time—to do everything we want to do), without allowing ourselves to be consumed by what we cannot accomplish this week, this month, or this year.

In addition, communities are dynamic entities. Despite a rigorous selection process, circumstances, people, and political agendas are bound to change over the five years of this Initiative and have already changed within the course of this first year. This cannot be avoided. Communities are comprised of people with differing opinions about how we should educate our youth, and businesses and schools that have varying opinions of one another's performance and intentions. Furthermore, communities have uneven and sometimes unstable leadership within their educational, employment, and civic institutions that are key to the school-to-career system-building process.

Four out of the five school districts in this initiative have new superintendents. Although the full ramifications of their departures have yet to be seen, based upon current opinions and activities in the communities it appears that school-to-careers is weathering the storm. JFF's and the Benchmark Communities' collective efforts to build broad-based consensus and movement around school-to-careers may be partly responsible. The communities have accomplished a good deal in this area by publicly stating that school-to-careers is a top priority for the district; soliciting input from school staff about the design of the school-to-career system; and providing resources, staff, and professional development opportunities to schools that have embraced school-to-careers as a reform strategy. JFF has provided advice and assistance to the communities in all of these areas and has taken great pains not to be seen as one party's advocate, but as the neutral convenor of the various interests and institutions within the community. JFF and the Benchmark Communities have taken care to ensure that school-to-careers is not perceived as one community leader's agenda that lasts only as long as that person is a driving force in the community.

SCHOOL-TO-CAREER SYSTEM BUILDING INVOLVES MORE THAN SCHOOLS AND EMPLOYERS

In each of the Communities, JFF has spent a substantial amount of time and energy getting to know most of the players involved in the school-to-career system-building process; gaining their trust and respect; understanding the community's educational history, economic climate, and political landscape; and determining what niche JFF can play within this context. We believe JFF has established the kind of rapport necessary with each community to effectively contribute to their system-building efforts. Yet, while there appears to be solid base of support in the communities for school-to-careers, this base is neither deep nor broad enough for us to become complacent about the task of consensus-building. There are at least three parties to which we have paid insufficient attention: school boards, parents, and state officials.

Although we have encouraged school staff to keep school boards apprised of their school-to-career system-building efforts, it is becoming more and more apparent that JFF should play a more active role in educating school boards about school-to-careers and the BCI, and in keeping them "in the loop" about system-building efforts. Especially with the relatively short tenure of urban school superintendents, it is important that the leadership of the schools understands the concept of school-to-careers and is committed to the system-building process for the long term.

Parents are also an important, but often overlooked, constituency. Philadelphia has probably been the most aggressive in not only informing, but including, parents in their recent school reform discussions and agenda. JFF and the communities will need to spend more time thinking about how best to involve parents in the school-to-career system-building process. If parents are not involved soon and in a meaningful way, they can quash further developments and even dismantle existing efforts. North Clackamas is experiencing some uncertainty about the future of school-to-careers, not so much because of lack of local support, but rather because of the debate currently being waged at the state level over Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery. Public anxiety and confusion about Oregon's educational reform law, adopted in 1991, is so strong that it is likely that the law will be revised and it may be repealed. While the North Clackamas School District believes that it has the support of the business community and parents to continue its school-to-career efforts even if the law is repealed, they are well aware of the need to better inform and involve the entire community in their system-building efforts.

As the Oregon example further illustrates, states are important players in the school-to-career system-building process. This is especially true given that the federal School to Work Opportunities Act provides money directly to states that are seen as leaders in creating state school-to-careers systems. While three of the Benchmark Communities (Jefferson County, Milwaukee, and North Clackamas) are in states that have received this funding from the federal government, we have not yet done enough to connect our local system-building efforts with the state system-building efforts. If we are to maximize resources and ensure that the lessons learned by these pioneering efforts are incorporated into state policy, JFF and the communities will need to develop stronger ties with state officials and a clearer understanding of what direction the state is heading.

EVALUATING THE SYSTEM-BUILDING PROCESS AND PROGRESS

To ensure continuous improvement within the Benchmark Communities and to benefit federal, state and local school-to-career system-building efforts, the work of the Benchmark Communities must be carefully monitored, documented, and evaluated. Their progress and setbacks must be showcased to federal, state, and local policymakers and practitioners.

The strength and challenge of our research effort is that the BCI seeks to build an effective educational and labor market *system* for all youth. In contrast to traditional demonstration projects, this system-building strategy, while governed by school-to-career principles, is not defined by any one approach and has the potential to saturate an entire community. Furthermore, each of the communities involved is starting at a very different place in terms of existing school-to-career efforts, business and community involvement, level of resources available for system-building, and challenges. Although the Initiative's comprehensive nature makes evaluation of the process as well as its impacts more complicated, JFF believes it has developed an effective strategy that involves the communities themselves in identifying appropriate performance indicators; includes significant documentation and analysis of system-building strategies and implementation procedures; and attempts to assess institutional as well as student progress.

With help from outside consultants and based upon this year's work, JFF is currently refining its research design to ensure that the information that we collect will capture sufficiently the system-

building process as well as the impacts that this reform effort will yield. JFF will share this design with the Benchmark Communities in the near future to get their feedback and to begin negotiating access to student data, setting up the systems necessary for this data collection effort, and identifying appropriate program and comparison groups for the student outcomes analysis, which will be highlighted in the third-year and final reports.

SUSTAINING MOMENTUM

Building upon and sustaining current momentum in the Benchmark Communities is one of the most important tasks of the upcoming years. The first year of any major school reform effort is typically a telling time about whether the changes envisioned have enough support to take root and flourish. In this respect, the BCI has passed a major test. *The school-to-career system-building vision and initial efforts have been fairly well received; school-to-careers is gaining recognition across all five Communities; the infrastructure for sustaining a school-to-career system is slowly being built; and the Communities see JFF as a resource, not an outside intruder.*

One way in which to build upon current momentum is through internal and external validation of the Communities' accomplishments to date. This means encouraging and helping the Communities to communicate their school-to-career plans and activities to their respective constituencies, continuing to showcase systemic thinking and implementation efforts at conferences for the Benchmark Communities, and paying increasing attention to publicizing the promising system-building strategies emerging in the communities to federal, state, and local policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the general public.

This report is one of the first written accounts to showcase the work of the Benchmark Communities. In addition to the reports and other written materials that JFF will generate about this initiative, the Benchmark Communities themselves will increasingly serve as national advocates for the school-to-career movement. Last summer their work was highlighted at JFF's National Leadership Forum in Boston attended by over 1,700 educators, business leaders, policymakers, labor representatives, superintendents, students, and community leaders who met to advance, share, and learn about state-of-the-art school-to-career systems and components.

This first year, while an important milestone to pass, may actually be one of the easiest. As the novelty and excitement of being

chosen to participate in the BCI wears off, the upcoming years will really test the viability of current plans, the patience of those involved in this difficult process to keep working at their long-term goals, and the capacity of JFF to continue motivating and guiding the Communities in their school-to-career system-building efforts. Nevertheless, with the commitment and enthusiasm exhibited this first year, we approach this next year with optimism and with a greater understanding and appreciation of the work that lies ahead.

APPENDIX I

THE BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES—SITE INFORMATION[1]

	BOSTON	JEFFERSON COUNTY	MILWAUKEE	NORTH CLACKAMAS	PHILADELPHIA
Population	575,000	665,000	630,000	81,217	1.5 million
Total School Population	57,000	96,000	100,000	13,787	211,805
Ethnicity of Total School Population (%)					
African-American	48	33	59	1	65
Asian	9		4	5	6
Latino/a	22		11	4	9
Native American			1	1	
White	21	66	25	89	20
Number of Participating Schools	5 out of 16 high schools	5 out of 22 high schools	8 out of 15 high schools 10 out of 21 middle schools 25 out of 111 elementary schools	3 high schools	28 high schools 7 middle schools 18 elementary schools
Number of Participating Students	6,000	6,645	30,000	4,087	19,828
Dropout/Completion Rates (%)	27.8 (cohort dropout) 8.7 (annual dropout)	90 (cohort completion)	38 (cohort dropout)	79 (cohort completion) 6.4 (annual dropout)	7 (annual dropout)
Postsecondary Enrollment (%)	90 (exam-school graduates) 53 (non-exam-school graduates)	63 (includes 2- and 4-year colleges and technical schools)	71 (includes 4-year colleges and vocational/ technical training schools)	84	69 (includes 4-year colleges and vocational/ technical training schools)

[1] Data included in this table is the most recent available.

[2] Approximately 20 percent of Boston high school students—selected on the basis of grades and entry exam scores—attend Boston's exam schools. The remainder attend one of 13 non-exam schools.

APPENDIX 2

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE BOSTON COMPACT MISSION AND GOALS STATEMENT

The goal of the Boston Compact is to assure that Boston Public Schools students graduate from high school and are educationally prepared to meet the demands of higher education and business in a changing global economy.

The twofold Compact mission of preparation and opportunity commits all signers to measurable improvements in two aspects of public education:

(A) All Compact signers will make a commitment that the Boston Public Schools will have the leadership and training needed to bring about significant school improvement.

(B) All graduates will have measurable success for at least two years after graduation. This commitment will promise a future in higher education, training, and careers for every Boston graduate. Every graduate will be assured the opportunity for a degree, advanced learning, and a career. Appropriate support to families and children will be provided from an early age.

The goals have been developed and endorsed by the Boston School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor, the Boston Private Industry Council, the Coordinating Committee, the Boston Higher Education Partnership, and the Boston Teachers' Union.

Goal 1 Access to Employment and Higher Education

Goal 2 Commitment to Innovation

Goal 3 Comprehensive Curriculum, Achievable Standards, and Effective Assessment Methods

Goal 4 Training and Professional Development

Goal 5 Support for Parents and Families

APPENDIX 3

JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

MODEL FOR JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAGNET CAREER ACADEMY

Advanced Curriculum

Adult Access to Academy Programs

Industry Advisory Group

Articulation Joint Programs/ Technical Preparations

Integrated Curriculum

Faculty/Industry Exchanges

Demonstration of Advanced Proficiencies

Career Passport/Transition Services

Co-op/ Intern Programs

Student Support Services Center

Technology Education Laboratories

Youth Apprenticeships

Child-Care Facilities

Career Beginnings

Joint Academy, Industry, and/or University Training

Business/Industry Linkages

Post-Secondary Linkages

APPENDIX 4

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: CHARACTERISTICS OF A SCHOOL-TO-WORK SCHOOL

(1) The K–12 goals are the basis for school-to-work. The school-to-work process is how Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) will fully implement its K–12 teaching and learning goals.

(2) School-to-work is rigorous. School-to-work enables all students to successfully complete established performance requirements and meet high standards.

(3) School-to-work means equity. This means making significant progress toward eliminating gender, ethnic, and racial achievement gaps, and not tracking on the basis of higher or lower achievement levels.

(4) School-to-work is comprehensive. All students and teachers in a school are involved within school-to-work in three years. At least 25 percent are involved in the first year.

(5) School-to-work links school and community. All students are engaged in community/work-based experiences that impact on student learning and connect students to the community and the world of work.

(6) School-to-work means integrated studies. Students spend at least 25 percent of their time engaged in projects that are multidisciplinary; directly connect academic skills and work; lead to complex learning and problem solving; and involve inquiry as the basis of teaching and learning.

(7) School-to-work has themes or focus programs. School-to-work schools have themes or focus programs around which the integrated curriculum and community-business partnerships are organized.

(8) School-to-work means teams or "families." In school-to-work, students and teachers collaborate in teams or "families" over a period of time.

(9) School-to-work means all students are prepared for postsecondary education. School-to-work schools should enable students to meet high academic standards in all areas so all students graduate with a wide range of options. School-to-work schools also help students understand the link between careers and postsecondary education.

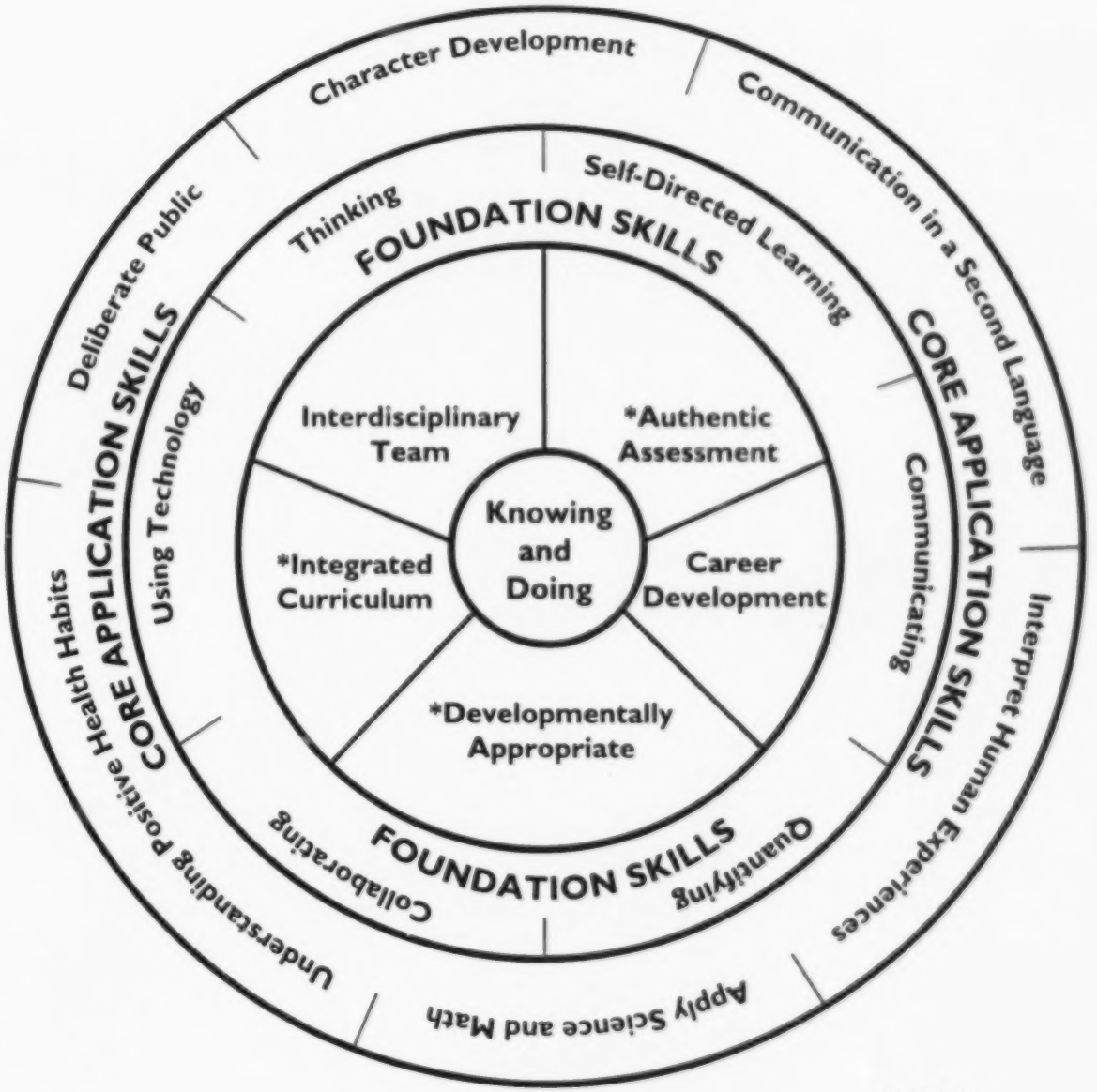
(10) School-to-work involves parents. School-to-work requires that parents are meaningfully involved in the ongoing implementation of school-to-work and kept well informed about the school's school-to-work goals, activities, and results.

(11) In school-to-work, assessment improves teaching and learning. Under school-to-work, the primary purpose of assessment is to measure the difference school-to-work is making in the achievement of students and to improve teaching and learning.

APPENDIX 5

NORTH CLACKAMAS, OREGON

CERTIFICATE OF INITIAL MASTERY GRADES K-10[1]



*K-10 Only

[1] From the District Improvement Plan for Certificate of Initial Mastery and Alternative Learning Environments, January 1995.

APPENDIX 6

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

SUMMARY OF PHILADELPHIA'S CHILDREN ACHIEVING ACTION PLAN

I. **Set High Expectations for Everyone**
- Establish rigorous graduation and opportunity-to-learn standards.
- Create an Office of Equity Assurance and a school culture that is flexible and innovative.

II. **Design Accurate Performance Indicators to Hold Everyone Accountable for Results**
- Implement a system of performance-based assessments tied to the new high standards for all students.
- Design an incentive system for staff that links achievement by all students to rewards and penalties and establish an Office of Standards, Assessment and Accountability.
- Negotiate agreements with the city's companies, postsecondary institutions, and unions to assure that all students who meet the graduation standards are admitted to college or hired for a job.

III. **Shrink the Centralized Bureaucracy and Let Schools Make More Decisions**
- Reorganize schools by feeder pattern, creating small learning communities with school councils to govern school-wide policies and resources.
- Restructure and downsize the central office in order to emphasize a system of client-centered services and supports.

IV. **Provide Intensive and Sustained Professional Development to All Staff**
- Make ample professional development resources convenient for teachers and administrators to use.
- Provide specific professional development opportunities—ongoing and transitional—that target priority needs.

V. **Make Sure That All Students Are Ready For Schools**
- Provide a full-day kindergarten program to all eligible children.
- In partnership with the Departments of Health and Human Services, create a Children and Families Authority.

VI. **Provide Students with the Community Supports and Services They Need to Succeed in School**
- Ensure that each school has an ongoing relationship with at least one community-based organization.
- Recruit and match 10,000 new volunteers with schools.
- Link students, including those who are pregnant or parenting, with health and social services agencies.

VII. **Provide Up-to-Date Technology and Instructional Materials**
- Conduct a comprehensive analysis and make a five-year recommendation of what technology and information will be needed to support student learning.
- Ensure that schools have the resources and support needed to transform libraries into technology resource centers and to provide one computer for every six students.
- Consolidate responsibility for the District's technology infrastructure into a single office.

VIII. **Engage the Public in Shaping, Understanding, Supporting, and Participating in School Reform**
- Build the capacity of all District staff to be better ambassadors for educational excellence.
- Continue listening closely to what the community expects from its schools and its children and develop accountability tools to help the public assess the District's performance.
- Develop messages and strategies that explain what Philadelphia schools are doing and why in order to mobilize and organize the community in support of public education.

IX. **Ensure Adequate Resources and Use Them Effectively**
- Investigate alternative financing opportunities.
- Ensure that the District is using of all available resources to the maximum extent possible in both instructional and non-instructional areas.
- Redesign teaching and learning so that the who, how, where, and when are viewed as variables and student achievement remains the constant.

APPENDIX 7

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE APPLICATION INFORMATION

Introduction

This summer, Jobs for the Future, Inc. (JFF) will launch a major work-and-learning initiative. JFF plans to select four communities with which we will work intensively over the next five years to establish large-scale, high-quality school-to-work systems that improve education and access to the labor market for large numbers of young people. The goal of this *Benchmark Communities Initiative* is to create compelling models of local school-to-work systems that demonstrate the feasibility of moving to scale and that provide a blueprint of how to get there.

System-building Goals for Benchmark Communities

Based on extensive involvement in both the program and policy sides of the school-to-work transition issue, JFF has developed what it believes are ambitious but realistic five-year goals for communities fully engaged in building comprehensive work and learning systems (see attached five-year goals statement). These benchmarks provide a means of measuring progress toward achieving the three main objectives of school-to-work transition reform:

- Creation of new labor market arrangements which provide young people a system of organized access to quality employment.
- Creation of more effective learning environments for *all* students through focused programs of study which integrate practical and theoretical instruction, and the worlds of school and work.
- Substantial improvement in young people's access to higher education and high-skilled employment as a result of these labor market and education reforms.

Three things should be clear upon review of JFF's goals for benchmark communities. First, our conception of operating a school-to-work system at scale involves improving educational quality and labor market connections for all students. Building a school-to-work system is not about improving vocational education for the "non-college bound." Rather, the aim is to better prepare every student for higher education and high-skilled employment through focused programs of study which make liberal use of workplaces as learning places.

Second, JFF perceives the task of building a community school-to-work system as a task of transforming basic labor market practices and relationships to better meet the career aspirations of young people, as well as the human resources needs of employers. It involves constructing a new social compact between business, education, labor, and government which commits each partner to a tangible and structured role in connecting young, skilled people to quality jobs.

Third, building a comprehensive work-and-learning system in a community will take many years and extend beyond the five-year time frame of this benchmark project. However, communities in this initiative that achieve the five-year goals will have created strong foundation elements for a comprehensive system.

Benefits and Responsibilities

JFF wants to establish deep and long-lasting relationships with its benchmark communities, participating as a full partner in each community's system-building efforts. Under the terms of this partnership, JFF is committed to providing the following resources to sites:

- assistance on key system design and implementation issues identified by the community partners. This assistance will be provided by JFF staff and a selective group of national consultants with expertise in school reform and worksite learning.
- creation of a national network to link the benchmark communities. To promote the development of its benchmark sites as a supportive community of change agents, JFF will sponsor national meetings and training sessions where sites can learn from each other, share best practices, and establish solid working relationships. In addition, JFF will employ a peer consultant model in which school, employer, and program staff from one benchmark site will serve as consultants to another site on issues of system design and implementation.
- annual funding in the neighborhood of $100,000 per community to be spent in accordance with negotiated agreements between JFF and the stakeholders at each location. JFF is in the process of raising these funds.

In return, JFF expects serious commitment from the stakeholders in each community to work together toward the system-building goals of the initiative. The material a community submits in its application, as signed by the lead partners of the initiative, will form the basis for more involved and detailed negotiations between the community members and JFF staff.

In addition, each community must be willing to share its experiences with the other communities chosen by JFF, participate in events JFF holds for the benefit of the benchmark communities, and allow the lessons of the five-year project to be disseminated nationally in JFF-produced research products.

Selection Criteria

JFF is looking for communities that have the capacity to move aggressively from a pilot stage to an organized system of work-and-learning for young people. This will be the over-riding selection criterion. Specifically, to be selected as a benchmark community, an applicant will need to demonstrate:

1. Broad and deep support of key leaders in the community to the vision and scale of work described by JFF's five-year goals. At a minimum, a community needs to show that school district leadership, key business leaders, and presidents of postsecondary institutions are committed to building a school-to-work system. Communities that can also show strong backing from the local teachers' union or organization, the school board, the mayor or chief executive officer of local government, local labor and community organizations, and parent groups will greatly strengthen their case.
2. The ability to implement the education reform agenda described in the five-year goals statement. A community needs to have established a solid track record of progress in implementing education reforms which support the development of a school-to-work system such as incorporation of experiential and project-based learning into the core curriculum and development of focused programs of study which integrate practical and academic learning.

3. A core of influential employers already participating in worksite learning programs. To achieve the goal of reaching scale within five years, a community needs to have some solid school-to-work programs already in place to build upon.
4. Economic and political conditions which favor widespread employer participation in work-based learning programs. Commitment from a core of leading employers is a necessary but not sufficient condition for generating community-wide employer involvement in a school-to-work system. A community with an expanding economy and a healthy base of employers is at an advantage in securing needed worksite placements. A community with a stagnant or shrinking economy will need to show evidence of other political and economic factors that can contribute to ensuring sufficient employer participation.
5. A credible plan to finance scale-up of the school-to-work initiative and to institutionalize the initiative. Creating and staffing a new institution to connect school and work, as well as starting up new school programs, will take money. Communities need to show that they can finance this venture. Communities in leading states that are committed to supporting the development of a school-to-work system and that are well-positioned to receive federal implementation grants are at a distinct advantage.

Selection Process

The timeline for community selection and launching this initiative is as follows:

March 14, 1994 — JFF sends out formal requests for applications. Over the next two months, JFF responds to applicants' questions.

May 17, 1994 — All applications must be received by JFF.

June 1, 1994 — JFF selects six communities as finalists. These communities will receive visits from JFF staff over the following month.

June 30, 1994 — JFF selects two sites. The remaining four sites will be subject to further review and have the opportunity to alert JFF to additional program progress in the following three months.

JFF will also use these months to formally begin partnering with the first two selections, negotiating use of JFF-supplied funds, and confirming commitments by community stakeholders.

How to Apply

All applications to become a JFF Benchmark Community must include the seven parts listed below (maximum single-spaced page length is indicated for each part):

- a cover letter, no more than one page;
- an application cover sheet (a blank is attached to this document);
- a description of the community context, no more than one page;
- a portrait of the community's school-to-work vision, no more than three pages (excluding the required appendix listing participating employers);

- a progress report of any school-to-work elements already in place, no more than three pages;
- a description of system-building strategy, no more than three pages; and
- a summary of financing plans and budget, text no more than one page.

Please note: JFF encourages applicant communities to use language, budget projections, or other material used in their proposals for Local Partnership Grants under the joint U.S. Department of Labor/U.S. Department of Education School-to-Work Opportunities intiative.

The cover letter should present the argument for selecting your community as a benchmark site. In other words, what features of your community partnership put it in an exceptional position to move aggressively from the pilot stage to full-scale implementation of a local school-to-work system?

A pre-printed application cover sheet is enclosed. At a minimum, the proposal should be signed by the following partners: the superintendent of schools, key business leaders, the presidents of participating post-secondary institutions, and the board chair of the intermediary organization coordinating the partnership (if one exists).

The portrait of the community's school-to-work vision should summarize the main features of the school-to-work system being built. The following questions can be used to guide your presentation:

- **How will your community's high schools be reshaped to better prepare students for high-skilled employment and higher education?**
  - How will high school programs be redesigned to promote integration of practical and theoretical learning (*e.g.*, grouping of students and teachers in smaller units organized along career or thematic majors)? What percentage of students will participate in these programs? If these programs are not being designed to serve all students, describe the other major courses of study that will be available.
  - What role will work-based learning play in the curriculum? What types of work-based experiences will be available to students?
  - What reforms will be instituted to make new work and learning programs accessible to students who enter high school as discouraged and alienated learners?
- **How will labor market relationships be restructured to provide young people with a system of organized access to quality employment?**
  - What mechanisms will be created to connect young people to high-quality employment opportunities? Specifically, what types of structured pathways will the system offer students to move into a good first job?
  - How will business involvement in school-to-work programs be organized?
- **What roles will postsecondary institutions play in your community's school-to-work system?**
  - How will high school work-and-learning programs be linked to postsecondary training programs?
  - What role will worksite training play in postsecondary occupational education programs? Will apprenticeship-style on-the-job training be an important component of postsecondary occupational programs?

The progress report should give an overview of the school-to-work elements that the community has already put in place. In addition to the narrative, please attach a list of participating employers who are either currently providing or have committed to provide worksite training placements to secondary and postsecondary students. The list should include:

- name of the firm
- number of placements the firm will provide to secondary and postsecondary students during 1993-94 school year and summer (*e.g.*, "10 secondary and 5 postsecondary")
- type of placement, duration of placement, and whether paid or unpaid (*e.g.*, "one year traineeship; 10 to 15 hrs/wk for 42 weeks; paid")

The narrative portion should include brief descriptions of the following:

- the membership and status of your local school-to-work partnership, including a description of any formal compact or agreement among business, schools, and other community partners
- major reforms implemented by the school district during the past five years which support development of a comprehensive school-to-work system
- major work-and-learning programs already underway in your community, including the number of students and employers involved and the types of worksite training experiences provided
- the involvement of postsecondary institutions (dual enrollment, guaranteed admission, etc.) in structured work-and-learning programs which link high school and postsecondary training
- any institutional mechanisms which now exist to connect students to high quality employment opportunities
- any school-to-work system elements unique to your community
- the results to date of your community's efforts: what is working, what is not, and what has been learned

The description of system-building strategy should summarize your community's plan for implementing the key school and labor market elements of the school-to-work system described in your vision statement. Using a five-year time frame, list the school and labor-market reforms you expect to achieve by the end of the fifth year of the project, and the major activities the partnership will undertake to accomplish these ends. In describing your strategy, please address the following questions:

- What are your strategies for recruiting employers?
- How will the partnership achieve strong headmaster and teacher support of the reform effort? What supports will be provided to teachers to help them make needed changes?
- How do your school-to-work implementation plans build upon existing learning, workforce development, and economic reform strategies of community partners?

The summary of financing plans and budget should describe the partnership's plan for financing the major activities described in your system-building strategy. In addition to a narrative, please present a rough budget of projected expenditures and revenues for the first year of the effort. Please detail the specific contributions that the school district, employers, and other stakeholders will make toward the success of this initiative.

The description of the community context should highlight economic and political conditions (e.g. expanding job base, supportive state policies) which favor widespread employer participation in work-based learning programs. In addition, this section should give a thumbnail sketch of the characteristics of the local secondary school district:

- number and ethnicity of students enrolled in grades 9–12
- percentage of ninth graders who complete high school
- average per-pupil expenditure for secondary education during 1993-94 school year and the projected expenditure for 1994-95 school year (if exact figure is not yet known, are you anticipating an increase or decrease in per-pupil funding?)
- percentage of high school graduates who enroll in four-year and two-year college programs (and, if available, completion rates)

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